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THE SPEAKER AT HOME.



“ Fungar vice cotis, acutum  
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exsors ipsa secandi.”—HORACE.

“ Mine be the whetstone’s task! which, blunt itself,  
Can to the knife its keenest edge impart.”



# THE SPEAKER AT HOME.

CHAPTERS ON PUBLIC SPEAKING AND

READING ALOUD.

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*SECOND EDITION.*

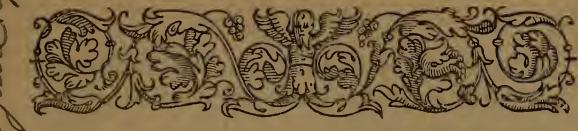


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## P R E F A C E.

**T**HE following pages are more especially addressed to the younger members of the Universities, in the confident hope that the subjects of which they treat will soon be recognized in their full importance by every man who is looking forward to serve in the Christian ministry. The time has passed when the Church of England can afford to let judgment go by default; and she has already suffered much by her supineness in this particular.

Unfortunately, erroneous opinions on this subject have been blindly acquiesced in until they have gained a sort of prescriptive authority; and even now, men of the most earnest and practical turn of mind are again and again found to endorse the absurd paradox, that, though the best years of life may advantageously be spent in storing the mind with the treasures of knowledge, yet a few weeks' study of the only means of applying

this knowledge should be absolutely forbidden—lest, forsooth, it should result in “foppery,” in “affectation,” or in “theatrical display.” Without attempting to argue against an objection so shadowy, we can only say that, so far from having any foundation in truth or reason, it seems to be a gratuitous insult to the Clergy, an insult to their office, and an insult to common sense. An insult to the Clergy, because surely that charity which believeth all things may well believe that any personal feelings would, as a rule, be entirely subordinated to the interests of the great work entrusted to them. An insult to their office, because when was it ever heard that men placed themselves in any responsible situation without long preparation for, at least, its more arduous duties. And lastly, an insult to common sense, because it is utterly incompatible with our experience in analogous cases. Does the soldier, borne along in the full tide of battle, think of the evolutions or the exact step of the parade-ground? Does the practised swimmer, battling with the waves to save a life, think of each once carefully studied movement? Decidedly not! Why then should it be supposed that an earnest man, engaged in the crowning act of his week’s ministry, and oppressed with the sense that in the mysterious ways of God’s providence the unalterable destiny of some of

his hearers may be imperilled upon his single appeal, why, I say, under such circumstances, should it be supposed that an earnest man would be thinking of rules, or of gratifying the littleness of mere personal vanity?


We may well hope that such objections will soon cease to prevent reading and speaking becoming recognized subjects of study; and, as a necessary consequence, the general standard of proficiency in them being raised far above its present level.

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THE chapters on reading aloud were originally thrown together for a lecture at the Crosby Hall Mechanics' Institute; and it seemed preferable to endeavour to write the rest of this little work in the style of a lecture, rather than recast that which was so far prepared.

July 25, 1859

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

N thanking those gentlemen who have so kindly complied with the request contained in page 47 of the former edition\* of this work, the author would venture again to draw attention to the advantage which may be derived from the results of experience being thus from time to time collected.

Nov. 1859.

\* Page 43 of this edition.

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## THE SPEAKER AT HOME.

### CHAPTER I.

“ Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,  
Which we ascribe to Heaven.”—SHAKESPEARE.

N audience of hearers is one thing, an audience of listeners is another. There is, perhaps, no class of men who have to realize this fact so often or so painfully as the younger clergy. A congregation gathered together to hear the words of one whose appeals and counsel have often before sent them away better and happier men is, from that very fact, a congregation of listeners; but confront them with a smooth-faced youth of some four-and-twenty summers, and they become at once—the first stages of somnolence having been shown to be peculiarly sensitive of sound—hearers only in the most limited sense of the word.

Nor is it the younger clergy only who have to complain of this listlessness on the part of their hearers; from the very nature of the case, it is an evil which every preacher has more or less to contend with. Men go to the public meeting, to the courts of law, or to the Houses of Parliament, with

minds occupied with the subjects under discussion ; not so, however, with the congregations who gather Sunday after Sunday in our churches ; their minds are too often entirely preoccupied with subjects the very antipodes to those which are to be brought forward, and, therefore, the danger evidently is that their thoughts will still flow on uninterruptedly in the same channel.

There is a story told of a shipbuilder in one of our large seaport towns, who, after attending service on the Sunday morning, remarked that he had planned out the whole of a new vessel which he had to commence, and that he was much pleased with many improvements that had suggested themselves to his mind, during the uninterrupted half hour of the sermon. On his return, however, on the following Sunday, after having heard a stranger, on being asked how he had got on with his ship-building, he declared that he had not been able to lay a single plank !

The first thing we have to do, then, disguise the fact as we may, is to break off the attention of our hearers from the matters which previously engross their minds. The question is, How is this to be done ? Experience says that the system in vogue up to this time has signally failed, and that a large body of the most highly-educated men in the country are positively unable to obtain a patient hearing for half an hour a week, on a topic which, for power of enlisting the attention and sympathies of all classes has no equal.

Now the first requisite, that of gaining attention, is undoubtedly to be acquired by *extempore* speaking ; whether such speaking be good, bad, or indifferent,

you cannot help listening. Let four persons be in a room together—A is talking to B, and C to D, and B wishes to hear what C is saying; no matter what common-place A is talking, B cannot so entirely abstract his mind as to listen to C: this is ten-fold more the case in a public assembly, where hundreds are keeping silence for one man to speak.

One reason of this is well given in the following passage from Archbishop Whateley's *Rhetoric*.

“The audience are more sure that the thoughts that they hear expressed are the genuine emanation of the speaker's mind at the moment; their attention and interest are excited by their sympathy with one whom they perceive to be carried forward solely by his own unaided and unremitted efforts, without having any book to refer to: they view him as a swimmer supported by his own exertions; and in every such case, if the feat be well accomplished, the surmounting of the difficulty affords great gratification; especially to those who are conscious that they could not do the same. And one proof that part of the pleasure conveyed does arise from this source is, that as the spectators of an exhibition of supposed unusual skill in swimming would instantly withdraw most of their interest and admiration, if they perceived that the performer was supported by corks, or the like, so would the feelings alter of the hearers of a supposed extemporaneous discourse, as soon as they should perceive or even suspect that the orator had it written down before him.”

All then, at first, is manifestly in favour of the extempore speaker; he has a listening and anxiously expectant audience.

What, then, shall induce any one to forego such

an advantage? And what will induce even the members of a congregation themselves to say that they prefer to listen to a written sermon?

First, for the speaker himself—he says he has not sufficient fluency of language; secondly, subject-matter is apt to fail him; thirdly, he has not the power of arranging his ideas into a clear and convincing argument; fourthly, he is apt to say that which after more mature reflection he would have omitted.

Many persons, who have never attempted to speak in public, decide that they have not sufficient fluency of language from the fact of their feeling a defect even in ordinary conversation. Now it may seem a curious assertion, but I believe that nearly all public speakers will affirm that they find it more difficult to express their ideas in one continuous flow of language in *conversation* than they do in a public address. Nay, many men have so felt their deficiency in attempting to explain their ideas to a single person previous to addressing a meeting, that it has been only the continued experience of this fact that has prevented their being disheartened by it. But this may be readily accounted for:—first, there is the additional stimulus arising from the sympathy of numbers; there is the absolute necessity of not showing any hesitation, and the acquired habit of giving up the expression you want, if it does not come to hand, and substituting some other, though much less forcible, in its stead; again, in conversation men have generally to arrange their arguments as they go on; new ideas are suggested or sought for whilst they speak; they are not exactly decided what they want to say, nor are they familiar enough with their sub-

ject to have all the terms and expressions ready for use. Let them, however, be telling you something of which their whole mind is full, some piece of good news or some story of an injustice done to them, and there will be very little hesitation. Hence want of fluency in conversation, or in the first attempts at public speaking, is by no means *primâ facie* evidence that a man will not eventually speak without the least hesitation.

Secondly, subject-matter is apt to fail the speaker.

This objection is perhaps the one which carries the greatest weight with it, and yet it may be shown, more than any other, to be based on a fallacy. It is founded on the supposition that the term *extempore* refers to *matter* as well as to language. The lawyer has seldom much difficulty in speaking, because he has always fresh facts and fresh arguments which have to be conveyed to his hearers. If the speaker neglect to store his mind with new ideas and new arguments, the surprise would be if his subject-matter did not fail him. He is expecting to do that which no other class of persons ever has been able to do or simple enough to attempt.

Another advantage of the mind being well stored with subject-matter is, that any slight hesitation or verbal inaccuracy is scarcely more observed than it would be in conversation; and for this reason—that it does not indicate that a man is getting out of his depth, and at a loss what to say next; thus the hearer's mind is carried along by a connected argument, and it is only when that connection seems to be endangered, that any nervousness is likely to be felt for the speaker.

In answering the third objection, that the speaker



has not the power of arranging his ideas into a clear and convincing argument, we must take into consideration the fact which experience amply bears out—that the majority of men are so educated, that, except on the most ordinary subjects, or on questions which have become matters of private or public discussion, they *have no definite ideas at all*; and it is only when they attempt to render their dim and shadowy conceptions sufficiently tangible to be grasped by the mind of another that they perceive any difficulty; they then find that their outline of thought is often in itself very incomplete, and the details either refuse to arrange themselves in harmony with it, or are in some places wanting altogether.

If the truth of these remarks be admitted, it follows that some plan will have to be adopted by a speaker to overcome this difficulty, inasmuch as he cannot possibly convey to others that which he has not clearly conceived himself. He will, I think, be obliged to have recourse to *writing*. By this means he will at once unravel the tangled skeins of thought which may have been lying in a confused and useless mass in his mind. The first putting pen to paper will also be the signal for a host of new ideas to rally round him; and, as he advances upon each division of his subject, fresh recruits will continually be pouring in—raw levies they may be, but requiring only care and subordination to constitute them valuable auxiliaries; camp followers and baggage there must be none; all must be meant for service, “not yet mature” perhaps, “but matchless:” then, if the plan of the campaign be but skilfully laid, and execution be not wanting, not more surely would the exiled Prince, returning




once more to claim his own, and, gathering strength at every step, advance to conquest, than would the orator, wielding at will the powers which his patience had disciplined, make all difficulties fly before the onward march of his resistless argument. If, on the contrary, whether despising his adversary or overconfident in himself, he advances prematurely to the conflict, discomfiture must inevitably be the consequence — a discomfiture not the less galling because it is to be attributed solely to the fact that he has, wantonly or presumptuously, neglected the only proper means of ensuring a different result.

The fourth objection, that a person will put forward much that maturer thought would have led him to suppress, can only arise from the *abuse* not the use of extempore speaking. If a man have acquired the power of keeping strictly to the subject-matter that he has prepared, it is only possible for him to commit verbal errors.

## CHAPTER II.

“ The wise and active conquer difficulties  
By daring to attempt them ; sloth and folly  
Shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard,  
And make the impossibility they fear.”—Rowe.

 HE first requisite for public speaking is the power of clothing thoughts *previously conceived* in appropriate language ; the second, the power of weaving together a succession of thoughts into a harmonious whole.

In the outset, then, we shall find that some men have greater difficulties to contend with than others. For instance, the man, some eight or ten years of whose life has been spent in studying the classics, will have gained an accurate and almost instinctive perception of the various shades of meaning expressed by nearly synonymous words ; and more than this, a continual habit of translating classical authors will have given him not only a ready command of words, but an aptitude for arranging them, so as best to convey his meaning.\* For those who

\* “ The future orator must, by long study and repeated compositions of a finished kind, handle and turn all expressions of language, various constructions of sentences, and endless combinations of words, until they have become supple and well-trained instruments of the mind, giving him no longer any

have not had this previous training, perhaps the most useful exercise will be to take up a book, and, choosing out words or expressions from it, to vary and modify them; *e. g.* I wish — intend — purpose — think of — meditate — my desire, intention, or wish, is — my inclination leads me. Or again: hatred — dislike — loathing — disgust — aversion — distaste — disinclination to — objection to — prejudice against — antipathy to, &c. It may seem a childish exercise, but is none the less useful for that.

Having secured the use of the right words, we then want them put in their right places in the sentence. This nothing but continual *practice* will effect; an expression which in itself involves the idea of private study, not of public exhibition.

The question arises, How is one to practise speaking with no one to speak to? It may be answered by another question, How can a man learn singing with no one to sing to? Even by singing to himself: — so a man may speak to himself.

The best speakers tell us to abstract our minds from the individuals of the mass of people before us. Some even would conceive them to be so many blocks of wood; and surely, therefore, tables and chairs will stand for an audience under these circumstances.

The next question is, What to speak about? Take up the first book that comes to hand, the more simple it is the better; after reading a passage carefully through two or three times, close the book and give your own version of it.

trouble while actually speaking, and accommodating themselves unresistingly to the slightest guidance of his thought."

M. BAUTAIN on *Extempore Speaking*.

It would be well to choose narrative in preference to argument to begin with, because, without calling the thinking powers into action, it gives the mind a clue quite sufficient to prevent it rambling. Besides, there is not the same feeling of unreality in narrating a fact that there is in actually addressing an imaginary audience. A more important point than some men may conceive; as there will at first be an almost invincible repugnance, in many minds, to do anything which at the time seems so totally unreal; anything of which, in fact, a man fancies he should be ashamed if any one intruded suddenly into the room in which he was speaking.

I shall now dwell upon some of the difficulties which will meet the speaker at the outset. First and foremost, he will be apt to get into the middle of a sentence and then find himself utterly unable to complete it grammatically. Under these circumstances he will probably be inclined to adopt one of two alternatives, either he will go on and finish it in the best way he can,\* putting grammar for the time on one side, or he will go back and begin the whole sentence again. The objection to the first plan is, that he will get into a fluent, but loose slovenly way of speaking, which will be much more readily formed than got rid of; and to the second, that he will acquire a habit of hesitation and uncertainty, which would make any man intolerable to listen to.

In addressing an audience, a speaker *must* adopt

\* “ Nevertheless, when once you have begun, you must rigidly beware of retreating by any break in the thought or in the sentence. You must go on daringly to the end, even though you take refuge in some unauthorized turn of expression or some incorrectness of language.”—M. BAUTAIN *on Extempore Speaking*.

one or other of these plans of getting out of such a difficulty; but in practice it will be as well to remember the old adage, that "prevention is better than cure." With this view the student may begin by reading so small a portion of the narrative that he will necessarily adopt as nearly as possible the construction of the author; after which, by taking several sentences together, this similarity of order and expression, though still apparent, will become less marked.

Thus, simple as the process may appear, the first lesson will have been taken in that accuracy of thought and expression which is generally supposed attainable only by our most gifted speakers, and not by them until after many years of comparative failure.

I need hardly point out the works best suited for this kind of practice; my only suggestion is, that a man should select such authors as he may desire to become acquainted with, so that, even if he should fail in making any progress as a speaker, his time will not have been wasted. Thus a university man with some examination pending would probably select works bearing on the history of his subjects. The theological student would take up Robertson or Milman, Blunt's "History of the Reformation," or some such work; and I question if he will find any plan give him a more accurate knowledge of a subject than the one here suggested.

Having by this means acquired some facility in giving expression to his ideas, the student would begin to take longer portions at a time, to render into his own words. Having carefully studied, say the greater part of a chapter of some work, he would write out a few notes, and speak from them; they

should be written out with care, and well studied, so as to form a sort of *memoria technica*, always present before the mind's eye of the speaker.

I have thus far considered only the case of a man who should adopt this system by himself. I need hardly say how great an advantage and stimulus it would be for two or three to pursue some such plan together, or, at least, occasionally to compare notes and offer the suggestions of their own experience. The more fault each found with the other, the better ; no man notices his own peculiarities, however glaring they may appear to others, or, if he does, the chances are he looks upon them as anything but faults ; anything, however, which can be remarked upon, one way or the other, is always bad ; the mere fact of its having excited attention proves it—for the simple reason, that the subject is what a speaker has to impress upon his audience ; and it is only at the expense of his subject that he can direct attention to himself.

To many the course of study I have proposed, though involving nothing more than half an hour's, or an hour's, regular daily practice for a few months, will seem to be mere childish drudgery. But what that is worth having was ever attained without drudgery ? How many years' labour, for instance, is represented by the single performance of the skilful musician ! \* and yet what scales and exercises are to him, some such labour as is here suggested must be to the speaker. It is true, that, eventually, natural taste or ability may, in either case, render the want of previous training less palpable, yet without it the *same degree* of excellence will hardly, if ever, be attained.

\* Ruskin's Elements of Drawing.

## CHAPTER III.

“Modesty is to merit as shades to figures in a picture, giving it strength and beauty.”—LA BRUYERE.

**N**EEED hardly say that such study as I have suggested, though it will give fluency, will not get rid of that painful nervousness under which every man at first labours, even in addressing some half-dozen persons. I suppose no man, who has arrived at that golden epoch in his life's history, his twenty-first birthday, is quite ignorant of the state of feeling I mean,—the palpitation of every nerve, the laboured respiration, the sense of extreme uneasiness, and the unaccountable longing for some opportune interruption, are all expressions very inadequate to convey an idea of the mental and bodily torture often inflicted even by the random and jocular proposal that Mr. So-and-So shall make a speech.

I remember once going to a wedding breakfast with a friend who knew that he would have to “return thanks for the ladies.” He had spent a great portion of the previous night in concocting the most elaborate speech, while, during his two or three hours of anything but sleep, wild visions of his coming ordeal had flitted ceaselessly before his mental vision. He was duly called upon—he rose, began, in an

agitated and scarcely articulate tone of voice, to mutter something about the honour done him, then, with a half-uttered apology, sat down. Fortunately, like a true son of Mars, he soon showed that his facility in making his peace with the offended fair, severally, was fully equal to the difficulty which he had experienced in expressing his sentiments to them collectively.

Are not, then, the antecedent difficulties so great as to make it seem almost absurd to say that nine out of ten educated men will eventually *make fair speakers*? I think not. So far from the natural diffidence, which shows itself thus painfully at first, being any lasting hinderance, we may assert, I think, that no man ever made a good, that is, a persuasive speaker, who was not more or less nervous at first. He is, at least, likely to be free from that boldness which is just as offensive as excessive nervousness is painful to the hearers.

The question now is, How can a man overcome his first timidity? Manifestly by making small beginnings—by gradually gaining skill, and with it confidence; just as a child, in its attempts to walk, makes the first adventure across the floor of its nursery, assisted by every available means of support, so must the future orator make his essay in some arena which shall be to him at once a nursery of thought, of language, and of oratorical skill and discernment.

We should naturally point to our public schools as the first available training ground. Bacon says, rightly, “Custom is most perfect when it beginneth in *young years*, and education is but early custom. So we see in languages, the tone is more pliant to



all expressions and sounds, the joints are more supple to all feats of activity and motions in youth, than afterwards ; for it is true, the late learners cannot so well take up the ply, except it be in some minds that have not suffered themselves to fix, but have kept themselves open and prepared to receive continual amendment, which is exceeding rare." True, however, as the above is, it is hardly the whole truth ; there is often not only an inability for a study, or, at least, increased difficulty in " taking up the ply," but there is a *positive disinclination* to the task. Look around amongst those who have attained to, at least, a very pleasure-giving proficiency in playing, singing, or drawing, and how many do we think would ever have reached that proficiency had the study been always *optional*, had they not been *obliged* to go through the elementary drudgery whilst under tutors and governors ? Or, again, take the case of those brought up under the old public school system, and whose whole education has been confined to the classics, and how unable and unwilling do they prove themselves to " take up the ply" in mathematics ; and how small is the percentage amongst them of men deserving the name of mathematicians, compared with those educated under the more modern system. Instead of taking up the study *con amore*, they soon find out the minimum allowance which will enable them to pass muster, and not unfrequently fail even in that. So, unfortunately, experience proves it to be with those who have neglected the study of reading and speaking. Not that I allow that in either case it ought to be so, but speak only to the fact that so it is.

As, however, there is, I fear, very little chance of getting our schools to take this matter up for a long

time to come, we must be content to begin with the universities. Many will answer that the Unions at Oxford and Cambridge\* already afford ample scope for such exercises. True, they afford ample scope for the few inclined to make use of them at present; but, should the study and exercise of speaking once become popular, no one assembly could possibly afford, to even a small percentage of 2,000 men, opportunities "*magnis et cerebris exercitationibus*," which no mean authority has declared to be indispensable to form an orator.

In those colleges where there are not already debating societies, any man, with the smallest amount of energy and tact, having his mind aroused to the importance of the subject, and stimulated by the encouragement which will, I doubt not, shortly be held out to such studies, would find little real difficulty in organizing a periodical meeting of some dozen or more friends as provident as himself of their future duties and interests.

I would venture to make one or two suggestions with regard to such smaller debating clubs; first, that the subjects for discussion should be *less ambitious*,

\* Since writing the above I happened to be present at a harvest-home, at which a quondam schoolfellow presided. Though only of the same standing with the majority of candidates for Holy Orders, he addressed upwards of 200 persons with the most perfect self-possession and fluency, and, what was more, spoke always simply, shortly, and to the point. His only training had been the habit of occasionally speaking at the Union at Oxford; a fact which struck me as a very strong and practical illustration of the advantages to be derived from such societies.

Should this chance to meet my friend's eye, he will not, I trust, think I have greatly outraged his kind hospitality in thus constructing him a peg to hang a moral upon.

and involving less preparation, than the class of subjects usually chosen. The end in view is not information, either on political or other subjects; why, therefore, should a secondary object be allowed to defeat, or, at least, seriously interfere with the primary one? The motive for choosing the class of subjects usually discussed would be excellent did it not defeat itself. To illustrate my meaning let me refer to the somewhat analogous case of the popular lectures in the present day. The main object of a popular lecture is to provide rational amusement for the masses of the people, and though Mr. Dry-as-dust may prepare one replete with useful information, he defeats this design when he has to deliver it to a half-empty room.

Again, I would suggest that the subjects for discussion should be so divided, or even multiplied, that instead of half the would-be-speakers being reduced to the lame remark, that they quite agree with the observations already made, there may really be some approximation to the "*quot homines tot sententiæ*" which is so necessary to give life and interest to any such discussion.

One other suggestion I would offer, viz. that occasionally, instead of any subject being given for discussion, some subject should be given for *reading*—some scene or scenes from Shakespeare, one or more of the letters of Junius, or better, perhaps, than either, some of the speeches of Cicero or Demosthenes; nothing would be so likely to improve the style of reading as the criticism which would thus be called forth.


I need hardly remind most of my readers of the unanimous opinion of all classical writers, that the

practice of reading is one of the most absolutely essential parts of an orator's training. The reason is obvious ; every speaker knows the advantage, if not the absolute necessity, of gaining the power of combining *memoriter* with extempore speaking, as giving him the power of expressing his sentiments on points which require careful preparation and verbal accuracy—speaking from memory is, however, only reading from the pages of a composition deciphered by the mind's eye, rather than by the actual organs of sight. If, therefore, a man is not a skilful reader, his transitions of style will be so marked and disagreeable as completely to spoil the effect of what he says, and thus cause him, in a great measure, to fail in the object he has in view. Those who have attended the debates in the House of Commons will remember one or two speakers who evidently have not made the “art of reading” a part of their oratorical study.

Knowing that such debating societies as I have alluded to are much on the increase at the universities, and feeling sure that it only requires attention to be called to these details of their management to secure many far more valuable suggestions than I can offer, I forbear to enter further upon the subject.

## CHAPTER IV.

“ Aim at perfection in everything, though in most things it is unattainable. However, they who aim at it and persevere will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as unattainable.”—CHESTERFIELD.

E now consider the case of those who, having left the University and entered upon their various spheres of labour, are brought to realize for the first time their deficiency in this important branch of education. It would, however, be manifestly impossible to suggest any plan which should enable men gradually to obtain the skill and confidence necessary to speak on important matters in public, and which should, at the same time, be universally applicable.

The man of property who may have to speak at public meetings or take part in county business, the statesman having the interests of a large constituency entrusted to him, the lawyer whose ambition rises above sitting silent and briefless, or the physician, who may often experience the inconvenience of not being able to express his ideas correctly and lucidly, will each and all find opportunities, incidental to their several positions, of making their first attempts at public speaking on a small scale.

A few suggestions may be made to men so situ-

ated. The first is, that they should never miss an opportunity of speaking, when they may have any legitimate excuse for so doing.\* It is told of one of our great orators that he himself attributed his fluency of speech and readiness of reply, not to any laborious cultivation of his natural powers, but to the fact of his never having for years been present at any debate in Parliament without speaking, however shortly, upon the subject under discussion.

Lord Chesterfield's maxims on this subject are too valuable to be passed over. He advises every man not only to aim at correctness of speech in his ordinary conversation, but even to write the most common-place letter with care and accuracy; showing that the habit thus acquired will, in time, make it difficult for him to avoid expressing himself, on all occasions, with elegance and propriety.

The correctness here insisted upon in our ordinary conversation may at first sight seem likely to lead to pedantry and affectation; but a moment's reflection will be sufficient to enable us fully to appreciate the value of the suggestion. In the first place, very few persons, in casual conversation, seem to think that their having *begun* a sentence involves the least grammatical obligation to *finish* it. Let an ordinary colloquial discussion between educated men

\* The *cacoethes loquendi* which pervades all ranks of our transatlantic kinsmen has been held up as a warning to those who would make rhetoric a more prominent subject of study in this country. Talking, however, is not the Englishman's forte; and such are the antecedent difficulties which any one aspiring to speak in public will have to contend with, and so difficult and discouraging will his first attempts inevitably be, that there is little fear of any, but those who really take up the study *con amore*, ever becoming troublesome from their facility of expressing their sentiments in public.

be taken down *verbatim*, and I question whether even the gifted possessor of a first class Government certificate would be able to parse and analyze it. A person of excitable temperament will doubtless experience some difficulty in thus forcing himself to complete a sentence when he sees that it will not quite express his meaning, or after some new or different idea has struck him; but, until he has formed the habit of doing this in private, he is never likely to pass muster as a speaker in public. Another habit, which we are all more or less apt to fall into, is that familiarly known as "humming and hawing," whilst mentally groping for a word which most provokingly eludes us. What should we think of a person who, when writing, should give utterance to similar sounds every time his pen stopped and he had to think how to express his meaning? And yet there is no reason why a man should not think as quietly in speaking as in writing—the very pause which he is obliged to make will often add to rather than detract from the force of his words; besides which, the calmness and deliberation which this involves is the very soul of good speaking, as without it a man has not even command over himself, much less of his audience. Until, in "the very torrent, tempest, and, I may say, even whirlwind of his passion, he can acquire and beget a temperance which may give it smoothness,"\* he will never be able to avoid the "inexplicable dumb show and noise" which the above habit often involves.

That Lord Chesterfield's remark also applies to the use on all occasions of appropriate words and

\* Hamlet.



forms of expression is manifest ; but it is a question whether much of the significance of his admonition has not been lost by confining it entirely to elegant accuracy, which, after all, is a matter of secondary importance ; for if the words immediately suggested to the mind are such as clearly convey the meaning of the speaker, they must be more appropriate for ordinary conversation than any which cost him a greater effort. As Bacon justly observes :—“ Discretion of speech is better than eloquence ; and to speak agreeably to him with whom we deal, is more than to speak in good words, or good order.” By attending to such simple matters as the above, a man will both render his ordinary conversation agreeable and correct, and will find his intercourse with society become one of the best preparations for his efforts in public.

We cannot, however, under any circumstances, expect a man to become even a moderately good speaker at once, or without long practice and experience, and there would be no surer way of preventing men ever attaining to excellence in this particular than to refuse them a certain amount of indulgence as beginners ; or, in other words, to consider it presumptuous in them to speak at all, until they could speak well. It would be an absurdity only equalled by that of the somewhat over-anxious mother who refused to let her son go into the water until he should have acquired the art of swimming. Accordingly, this indulgence is given to most men, and they are not considered presumptuous if their first efforts at public speaking are not crowned with complete success. But, unfortunately, there is a very large body of men from whom this indulgence



is necessarily, though perhaps too arbitrarily, withheld. I mean the clergy. They must begin well, or never begin at all—the slightest hesitation, the least verbal or grammatical inaccuracy, the smallest wandering from the subject, will call down upon them the severest criticism for presuming to do that for which they are not fully qualified; and yet there is no class of men to whom a facility of speaking is so absolutely indispensable, not only in the church, in the cottage, and in the sick room, but on numberless public occasions, where they are obliged to be present, and are invariably expected to have something to say. How then is the clergyman to begin extempore speaking?

Separated from the opportunities of that companionship in labour which lightens it of half its toil, with no one whose advice he can ask, or upon whose experience he can rely, met at the outset by difficulties which have too long been considered insurmountable, how shall a young clergyman set to work to remedy this defect in his education? Let him make his first attempt at extempore speaking in *his schools*. Inclination and duty will alike lead him occasionally to address the children, though only for a few minutes; and there is no reason why such opportunities should not be multiplied and turned to good account for the purpose of which we are now treating. The great thing will be for a man not to *despise his audience*, children though they may be, but to think over what he is going to say, and try to speak as correctly as he would wish to do on any more public occasion. Should he succeed in arresting the attention of his audience, for even five or ten minutes, he may congratulate himself on

his success ; for, though it may be tolerably easy by discipline to keep a large body of children from actual playing or whispering, it requires a real interest to be created to keep them from that perpetual motion so characteristic of childhood.

Unfortunately, the more artificial state of society, and the precocious literary tastes of its juvenile members, have quite driven out the time-honoured custom of "*story-telling*," and scenes once familiar as household words to us all are fast becoming matters only of family tradition. It is probable that the most thorough-going advocate of early mental dissipation would be somewhat startled now-a-days to hear the eager accents of entreaty conveying the old request, " Oh, do tell us a story ! " Though as the rapidly and vociferously repeated chorus of " Oh, do ! " burst simultaneously from many voices, it may be questioned how far his good nature would even now leave him an entirely free agent in the matter. Those whose dignity does not rise up in arms at the bare idea of such a proposal might occasionally find, in this best of all old-fashioned customs, a very agreeable method by which to test their powers of weaving together a connected narrative, and of expressing themselves in that simple and graphic language, which, whilst it is the only medium of communication with the uninstructed and untrained mind of childhood, is also the purest and most elegant which can be used in addressing a more sedate and educated audience. " Robbers or fairies " will doubtless still lay claim to a prominent place in the bill of fare on such occasions ; and to any one who is not enamoured of the high-pressure and utilitarian systems now in vogue, they will prove a fertile and

unfailing resource. Without, however, having recourse to these now almost exploded themes, the infinite variety of subjects comprised in the present cycle of juvenile literature, and really made patent to the most childish intelligence, will give ample scope to the modern story-teller to exercise his art. History alone, particularly if derived from such sources as Herodotus, Froissart, or Macaulay, and supplemented by an acquaintance with such writers as Shakespeare or Sir Walter Scott, will prove a mine in which the most inveterate story-teller might perpetually quarry without the least fear of exhausting its rich veins of amusement and information. But perhaps the best and most unfailing resource of all will be the narratives of the Old Testament history. The mere modernising of the language in which they have been previously read, and the filling in the details, from a knowledge of the manners and customs of the people, and the local peculiarities of the places described, will frequently render stories with which the youngest child is perfectly familiar as interesting as the wildest inventions of fancy or the most startling incidents of ordinary life. If, besides these methods of rendering the Scripture narratives fully appreciable by children, the actual names of persons and places should be sometimes suppressed, or even changed, the interest excited and the glad smile of intelligence which will gradually dawn upon one face after another, as they begin to guess the story really being told to them, will amply repay the little additional trouble which such a plan may involve. Add to this that the Bible will thus be made to hold its right place in the estimation of children; it will no longer be regarded as a book of

dry didactic study, but as an unfailing treasure-house out of which things new and old may perpetually be looked for; and, more even than this, it will no longer, as is too often now the case, be associated in after life with reminiscences the most painful, but with scenes which the memory will cherish most fondly and part with last.

But, to return to the curate and the village school-room, I would only further remark that, for a sort of school-room lecture, of about ten minutes' duration, the small packets of reward books, of which so many are published, will supply extremely useful materials. They embrace a great variety of subjects, and the information conveyed being always in a short simple form, a few minutes' careful study is sufficient to enable any one, who has acquired the most limited powers of speaking, to give the substance of them in an intelligible and interesting form.

Having, in the course of a year or two, acquired, by these means, a tolerable amount of self-possession and fluency, a man would probably begin by delivering his weekly school-room or other lectures without the aid of his manuscript, and would then gradually adopt the same plan in the pulpit—I say gradually, because few persons will be found equal to making so great a change as it involves at once. Whatever plan the particular circumstances may lead each individual to adopt, he has to bear in mind that his congregation, and not himself alone, have to be considered—that, on the slightest sign of hesitation, there will always be some, who, though they may be total strangers to him, will be sitting in an agony of nervousness lest he should “come to a stand-still;” if for this reason only, it would seem

advisable to begin extempore preaching by carefully preparing an extempore conclusion to his written sermon. The preacher "coming to a stand-still" will then be an event by no means so much dreaded by the congregation; and the feeling that he can conclude at any moment will of itself give him confidence; besides which he will then be more full of his subject, and therefore more earnest and natural.

I quite allow that this plan has its disadvantages, which, if not understood, may discourage a man at the very outset. Nothing is more difficult than suddenly to cease from reading the pages of a written composition and to commence speaking—the former must be more or less mechanical, while the latter requires the whole mind to be concentrated on the subject in hand. Thus I suppose the best speakers can hardly interpolate a written sermon with occasional short extempore periods, still less could they alter its subject as they go on; the possessing such power would be the best proof of a man having a real gift for extempore speaking. And yet how many clergymen, who read their sermons week after week, will tell you that they often introduce any matter which strikes them at the moment. Truly, may we say, that if in our country villages there are many "mute inglorious Miltons," in our country parsonages there are many "mute inglorious" Chrysostoms!

It is the fact of most men having experienced the great difficulty of thus interpolating their written sermons with extempore matter that prevents them attempting extempore speaking altogether. Every speaker would tell them that the first three minutes during which he thus speaks costs him a greater mental effort than the whole half hour or more which

succeeds. It is the "getting under weigh" which is difficult. What must it be, then, when a man has to "get under weigh" some half-dozen times, as he does when he is altering a sermon as he goes on?

In favour of thus concluding a sermon without reference to a manuscript, we might also argue, on the old adage, that "all's well that ends well," and that an earnest practical exhortation will bring home the main part of the subject which might before have been little appreciated by his hearers. Those who have ever adopted this plan will understand the effect which the change from reading to speaking irresistibly produces upon a congregation; the instantly riveted attention, and the silence of expectation, showing that the first point towards making some impression upon them has thus been gained. Another advantage of this method is, that it allows a man to begin extempore speaking gradually; he need only speak for two or three minutes after he ceases reading, or he may go on to any length which time and circumstances admit.

Again, this plan will be found more especially useful to those who, from having to prepare two or more sermons every week, feel it to the advantage of their congregation that they should make more or less use of any published sermons which they may have by them. In reading such there must always be a certain amount of formality and coldness, the effects of which will be greatly counteracted by the preacher summing up the whole subject in his own words, bringing it home to his hearers by a plain, earnest appeal, and thus enforcing, and practically applying, that which would else have fallen heavily and without point upon his hearers.



In venturing thus to urge those who have but recently entered into Holy Orders not to allow the first difficulties which lie in their path to prevent their making a resolute effort to acquire this most valuable of all aids in their ministerial work, I cannot but remind them how amply the labour of one or two years will be repaid through a whole lifetime; their labour will not only be eventually lightened, but will be productive of an infinitely greater amount of good. In the actual preparation of sermons the labour will be lightened, because it will enable them to make use of these same sermons without the least fear of their losing effect by repetition; and yet the labour of preparing them again will be very slight, resolving itself into merely reading them over and thinking out some portions with care and accuracy.

This will be of infinite assistance to them, either at a season when their services are increased, or when they may be called upon to address those who do not form a part of their regular congregation.


It would, however, be impossible to enumerate the advantages to himself and to others which may accrue from a clergyman's being able, on all occasions, whether in season or out of season, to speak forcibly and to the point. I can only ask whether the magnitude of the advantage ought not to make us all feel that we have scarcely done our duty until we have tried every available means of acquiring this power, and can certify to our own consciences that the want of it is to be attributed to positive incapacity on our own part, and not to any want of diligence or perseverance in the study of it. Let it only be remembered that the gift of speech is a talent com-

mitted to the Christian minister's charge to occupy for his Master's service, and then, if we refuse to use every available means of improving that talent, we cannot escape the conclusion that in that particular we must be counted as unprofitable servants.



## CHAPTER V.

Demosthenes "neither wrote the whole of his orations, nor spoke without committing part to writing."—PLUT.

 MAN is now supposed to have invested a capital of some months' or even years' labour, the returns of which will, we are convinced, under any circumstances, amply repay him; but though the actual power of speaking may have been thus acquired, the preparation for each particular exercise of it will still involve a considerable amount of labour; and any one who may have been induced to take up the study in order to save himself trouble will probably be greatly disappointed in the results which he obtains.

The plan now suggested is *to write* the so-called extempore sermon, and to study it carefully previous to its delivery. The main objection will be the time that would necessarily have to be given up to carrying this into effect. Supposing a man has one or two sermons to preach every week, to the same congregation, can he, without neglecting parish work, find time not only for the actual amount of writing required, and for the reading necessary to keep pace with so exhaustive a process, but also for the final preparation here suggested?

In the first place, it must be remembered that

to deliver a sermon even from a manuscript always requires a laborious preparation of two or three hours at least,\* in addition to the time spent in writing it, and that, too, in the case even of the very best readers. Unless a man is content to give up the power and effect which he undoubtedly gains by looking towards those to whom he is speaking, he must have gained so accurate an acquaintance with his subject that the eye may readily take in the whole of a sentence at a glance, and that, too, during the momentary pauses which he makes in the delivery. That this is one secret of the power of many of our most effective preachers few probably will deny; by this means they approach indefinitely near to the manner of extempore speaking, while they secure all the advantages of having the manuscript before them.

Unfortunately, experience proves that the vast majority of men are not able to carry out this method, that there is something in being tied down to the exact letter of that which was written in the quietness of the study, which makes the whole operation merely mechanical, and effectually checks the earnestness which the speaker really feels, but cannot give way to from the fear of becoming embarrassed between what he wants to say and what is written before him. He feels that if he only misplaces a single sentence, or anticipates a single idea, it may quite disarrange what is to follow;† whereas

\* Since writing the above, I have been told, by one of our most effective preachers, that I have *understated* the time which he considers absolutely indispensable for studying a written sermon.

† We have seldom found sufficient stress laid upon the manner in which a sermon is committed to paper. If it is to be

the man who is depending upon himself alone can throw himself entirely into his subject, and, with his mind full of it, and with the one object of persuading his hearers possessing him, he can hardly fail of being earnest and real himself, and making that reality felt by others.\*

If, however, a preacher can deliver his sermon as well, and, feeling the same earnestness, believes that he makes a greater impression upon his hearers by a written sermon than he could by speaking without it, he is, indeed, much to be envied; but let him not despise those who are less gifted, nor misunderstand their motives in adopting different means to attain to the same end. The real point at issue is not which is the better—to preach with or without a manuscript—but how can a man best enlist the attention, convince the consciences, and persuade the hearts of his hearers. To the man who has found out the means of doing this already the present inquiry will personally be one of slight interest, inasmuch as he is not likely to give up a substance for that which may seem to him a shadow.

read with ease there should not be more than eight lines in a page, and all the prominent words should be scored under so as to catch the eye at once.

\* “The habit of trying to repeat words as our own, (and which, perhaps, originally were our own,) but which, having been half forgotten, do not come directly from the living sources of thought and feeling at the time when they are spoken, induces an unnatural and artificial kind of tone and manner which is rarely met with anywhere but in the pulpit, and which tends at once to deprive sound, sense, and argument of half their power; to make use of speech in this way is to work with a broken disjointed instrument, and the hearers remain, they perhaps scarcely know why, uninterested and dissatisfied—such a plan cannot fully answer the great end we have in view.”—*Sermon by the REV. T. SHANN.*

It may not be uninteresting here to endeavour to ascertain to what the very different effects ordinarily produced by those who speak with, and by those who speak without, a written composition are to be attributed. Allusion has already been made to Archbishop Whateley's analogy, illustrating the interest excited by the fact of the speaker being evidently unsupported by any extraneous aid; it seems, however, very doubtful whether we can consider this feeling as anything more than an occasional accident of extempore speaking, and whether the analogy holds good to the extent to which it is often urged, inasmuch as any feat of skill necessarily loses its power of exciting interest by its frequent repetition. In the case, therefore, of a person continually addressing the same audience this feeling will soon exist in so slight a degree as to be valueless in accounting for the phenomena often witnessed. Surprise at the audacity of the speaker may indeed be kept alive by his betraying any signs of being unequal to carry through the task which he has undertaken, but the interest thus excited will be by no means a pleasurable one, nor one to which persons would often subject themselves. To reverse the above analogy, it would be akin to the sensation which would be felt on perceiving that the imagined adept in the art of swimming, having been used to be supported by "corks," had miscalculated his powers, and was fast sinking for the want of them.

The real cause of the difference alluded to seems to lie in the fact that true eloquence, under whatever circumstances it may be brought to bear, influences in the first instance the speaker rather than the hearer; and its effect upon the latter is in no way

determined by the question whether the orator is or is not dependent upon a manuscript before him. When the deep feelings of the heart have been stirred there is no place found for such superficial criticism, and the cause is entirely lost in the effect; if, therefore, a man can be found who can write as he would speak, and in delivering the written matter can divest himself of the frigid manner, the ill-timed or forced gesture, and the conventional tone usually inseparable from such an effort, that man will doubtless wield at will the minds of his hearers, with a power as resistless as that of the most consummate natural orator. As might be expected, from the greater difficulties which have to be surmounted, we shall find that for ninety-nine speaking there will not be more than one reading orator, (if I may use such tautological and paradoxical terms,) at any given time. The late Dr. Chalmers stood out almost alone in the latter character; not only did he read his sermons, and that too with great rapidity and the broadest accent, but often traced every line with his finger as he went on, using little or no action, and that little by no means such as would have seemed likely to add force to his words. And yet, with the aid of a voice not naturally harmonious, but singularly under control, and varying with every shade of thought and feeling, he could, by his intense heart-stirring earnestness, so enchain a congregation, so rivet their attention to his subject, and so entirely lead them captive at will, that any reflection as to the means by which it was all effected was utterly impossible at the time, while it was a matter of too little moment to be thought of afterwards. And so it will be always; no matter when, where, or how

exerted, earnestness will ever sound its "open sesame" to the human heart. In its stirring tones of reality there will ever be an inspired eloquence, which, like the winged messenger of ruder times, rising high over every impediment and borne upon unseen winds, will carry its message home with swift and unerring certainty.

I shall in a later chapter, when instancing the examples of those who have attained to the highest excellence in oratory, mention one or two incidents which will abundantly prove that no speaking orator, if I may still be allowed the term, ever surpassed Dr. Chalmers in the power of gaining a hearing from all classes of the people; at the same time I cannot but remark that he himself fully appreciated the advantages of extempore speaking. The expressive words of his own journal will best show his real and conscientious motives for not adopting that method of preaching. He writes—"Extemporised an hour and twelve minutes. Felt as if repeated too much—but Sandy declares it to be more impressive than the usual way!" Two months subsequent to this we find the following:—"Wrote notes of a sermon, and am to make another trial at the extemporising." He remarks, on another occasion, that he was seldom able to get beyond the first or second division of his subject, and could rarely, if ever, make his whole discourse complete in the given time. So fully alive, however, was he to the great disadvantages of being bound to the letter of his manuscript, that we find, throughout his career, he was in the habit of writing on separate slips of paper and committing to memory the passages by which he especially trusted to bring home his subject. These

passages he left out of his manuscript sermons and marked an “&c.” in the gaps thus occasioned.

In his Journal we find such records as the following:—

*October 4.* Employed in writing speech on Mr. Ferrie’s case.

*October 5.* Almost finished my speech on Ferrie’s business.

*October 6.* *Committed great part of my speech to heart.*

As, then, earnestness is the essential element in every true orator’s success, so we conceive that the general absence of it is the main cause of the comparative failure of those who endeavour to produce the same effects by artificial means. At the same time, it must be clearly understood that this term is not applied to the mere impulse or excitement of the moment of delivery. Genuine earnestness will be as different from mere “rant,” as the foolhardiness of the drunkard is from the undaunted bravery of him who goes out knowingly to meet death face to face. It will differ as much from a mere passing ebullition of feeling as the rude clamor of an excited mob differs from the stern purpose of the patriot, who, feeling that the long-looked for and decisive moment has arrived, casts away every thought of further preparation, and throws himself into the struggle, trusting to God and the justice of his cause for victory. And we may add, that, just as that patriotism will be but an empty name which does not lead a man to put all thoughts of self on one side, and to give up his time, his thoughts, and, if needs be, life itself, for his country’s cause, so that earnestness which has not previously led a



man to concentrate all his energies on the work he takes in hand will be little more than mere bombastic parade; it may be mighty to dazzle or to amuse, but it will never be mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

Granting, then, that much labour is necessary, under any circumstances, for thus delivering a sermon effectively, if it can be shown that the same amount of study would enable a man to deliver it without his manuscript, one of the main objections to the plan suggested falls to the ground. We will allow two hours as the time required to study a written sermon previous to delivering it, and another hour for the additional care required in revising and for the occasional re-writing of portions of the manuscript.

Are, then, three hours sufficient for a man to make himself so far master of that which he has previously written as to deliver it without his manuscript? I answer, that not only is this time amply sufficient, but that after the practice of some few months *it will be more than sufficient*, and that there will, therefore, eventually be a positive saving of time in addition to the other advantages of this plan. How great this saving will be in condensing, amplifying, re-preparing, or adapting to altered circumstances, sermons already preached, has been already suggested.

By those who are, as yet, only looking forward to their ministerial work, and who have still their habits to form, one suggestion, bearing very forcibly on the present division of the subject, will not perhaps be taken in bad part.

Many men, partly from college habits, and partly



from wishing to devote the greater portion of the day to parish work, will probably count upon the evenings as the best time for preparing their sermons.

Now, in the first place, a man who has been really at work all day will be tired and sleepy in the evening, and anything he writes under those circumstances will clearly evidence the exhaustion of his own mind, and will probably have a decidedly sedative influence upon those for whose benefit it is composed. He will not only—if I may so express it—speak *stupidly* and let his hearers go to sleep, but will speak *narcotically* and *send* them to sleep. On the other hand, if, getting the better of his weariness, he becomes thoroughly interested in his subject, it will probably be only at the expense of a night's rest, and an aching head in the morning. Besides which, the evenings are necessarily too much exposed to interruption ever to allow of any settled plan of work being formed for them.

The question, therefore, seems to resolve itself into this—whether a man will be content more or less to neglect his duty, or whether he will make an effort to break through the habit of lying in bed some two or three hours more than any purposes of health can possibly require ; whether, in plain language, he can make up his mind to get up at six o'clock, set a light to his own fire, boil his own kettle, get his breakfast, and settle to work by seven o'clock. Granted that for six or even twelve months this requires a very considerable effort, yet the advantages of the habit, when once acquired, will amply compensate for the temporary inconvenience.

The difficulties which many will conjure up on considering the feasibility of this plan, as applied to

their own cases, are such as from their nature may be readily surmounted. The main point will be for a man to let his movements depend, as far as possible, upon himself alone ; and, above all, not to try a compromise as to time with the other inmates of his household, not only because they will be just as well where they usually are at that hour of the day, but, because, as a rule, they will not be punctual to any time which may be fixed ; add to this, that the family breakfast-table, even without its newspaper and letters, generally involves a considerable sacrifice of time, and is seldom a good preparation for a morning's work.

The advantages of these early hours of study it is impossible to over-estimate ; a man will be secured against the temptation to hurry over the preparation for his Sunday duties. So far from neglecting parish duty, he will go every day to his work with renewed zeal and energy, while, by thus daily endeavouring himself to substantiate in practice that which he preaches, he will be at once forming his own character and guarding against one of the most insidious evils to which he can be exposed—that of allowing “ sermon-writing ” to become a merely intellectual, if not mechanical operation.

I say nothing of the fact of this arrangement leaving the evenings more or less disengaged for relaxation, casual reading, for seeing those whom it may be impossible to gain access to at any other time, and last, though not least, for those claims which society occasionally makes even on a curate ; though all these are advantages which will re-act much more practically than might be supposed upon the preparation of the Sunday's discourse.

The man who speaks without a knowledge of the world, of the opinions, feelings, and habits of those he addresses,\* is like a sentinel in the dark firing his piece at random at an enemy whose approach he hears without being able to distinguish his form, or to tell exactly from what quarter he is advancing; veteran soldier and skilful marksman as he may be, his discharge, under these circumstances, will be less likely to prove effective than if, in broad day-light, and with a clear view of the advancing foe, the rawest and most unskilful recruit had pointed the weapon.

It would be very easy to quote authorities to show that the labour necessary for extempore preaching has not been over-estimated. Dr. Cumming writes thus :—

“ I do not,” he says, “ think reading sermons is best;† I like myself best to hear them read, because I am often best satisfied with them; but I am convinced that the living speaker, speaking the thoughts that are in his soul, in language furnished to him at the moment, does speak with a power and demonstration and effect, notwithstanding his little inelegances, his periods not so well rounded, his sentences not so perfectly finished for critical ears, with which you never can be addressed from sermons merely read from manuscripts. I am no fanatic; I am sure you will acquit me of that; but I know the best thoughts I have ever spoken to you; and the thoughts I know

\* Dr. Johnson remarked of one of the greatest of English writers :—“ He had read with critical eyes the important volume of human life, and knew the heart of man from the depths of stratagem to the surface of affectation.”

† Dr. Cumming on *Instant Duties*, p. 386.

have been most blessed to you are the thoughts that never occurred to me in my study, but that have sprung up in my heart at the moment I have been speaking, suggested often by that attentive face that looked to me there, and by that riveted eye that looked upon me here, and by that silent listening that was perceptible elsewhere. I am persuaded, therefore, that God speaks to His ministers in the pulpit, and there through His ministers to the people. I do not say that to read one's sermons (because good men do so, greater and better men than I) is to dishonour the Holy Ghost; but I do say in my case, and in my experience, it would be parting with an element of power and a means of good which I would not resign for the whole world. But do not suppose that by extemporaneous preaching I mean going into the pulpit and saying what comes uppermost. Though I do not *write my sermons, it costs me hard and weary thinking, often followed by many a sleepless night, to prepare them.* It does not follow that because a man does not *write* his sermons that therefore he does not *study* them. It is quite possible to write in the most extemporaneous manner, as it is to speak in the most extemporaneous manner; sermons that are written may be the most random shots, sermons that are not written may be the results of the deepest study, meditation, and prayer."

If it were possible to obtain from some of the best speakers of the day an opinion as to how far extemporaneous speaking is a natural or an acquired power, also as to the previous preparation generally involved, and the use made of *memoriter* speaking, such opinions, grounded, as they would be presumed to be, upon actual experience, would go far, we believe, to

do away with the idea that great mental powers or superior gifts of speech are indispensable to the orator, and to confirm the opinion that the absence of these most desirable qualifications may, in a great measure, be made up for by perseverance and hard work.\*

It should not, however, be forgotten, by way of encouragement in this work, that the labour involved, in the preparation necessary to enable an ordinary man to speak with ease to himself and advantage to others, will continually be diminishing as his memory and powers of arranging his ideas gradually improve. He will also gradually be enabled to dispense with committing any portion of his subject entirely to memory, inasmuch as he will find himself more and more able to express his exact meaning, in language coming to him at the moment, without the least fear of his being misunderstood. Many men would also, doubtless, very soon dispense with writing fully upon their subject, and trust to arrange their ideas by making copious notes. This will answer very well for illustration, narrative, &c; but for the general matter writing will have this advantage—that when a subject is once fully written it is off the mind, and a man has nothing more to do than to read it over carefully an hour or two before delivering it; whereas, if he trust to arrange the subject in his head, it will not only require a

\* That in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom is especially true in those matters in which no two persons are likely entirely to agree. The author would, therefore, feel much obliged to any persons interested in this subject who would make any practical suggestions on the above or other points, stating whether such may be embodied in any future edition of this work.

continual mental effort, but some of the most forcible points which occur to him, at one time or another, will probably be forgotten before the time comes for making use of them.

With regard to preaching, men are apt to compare it with ordinary speaking. The lawyer or the statesman has continually fresh facts to deal with—facts which in themselves at once suggest fresh arguments to the mind, and keep them there when suggested; provided, therefore, they have acquired the power of expressing ideas previously conceived in their minds in appropriate language, they need but very little preparation for speaking. Let them, however, have to speak several times, on the same subject, before the same audience, and if, on each successive occasion, they expect to command an equally attentive hearing, to that they may have received on the first, they must have elaborately prepared new arguments, fresh illustrations, &c.

The preacher, however, has to speak, not several times only, but always upon the same subject, and the more closely he keeps to the one great object of all his teaching, the more he finds that he has no new facts to deal with; that all his arguments have already been urged in some shape upon his hearers, and that he will need a more than ordinary amount of thought and study to work out practical deductions from these truths, and thus to give to his arguments that amount of originality and pointed application which is indispensable to gaining a hearing and awakening conviction.

If, however, a preacher expects to be able to deliver a sermon, especially to an educated congregation, with as little preparation as he would address

a meeting on some subject the details of which he knew himself to be much better acquainted with than his hearers, he must not be surprised if his presumption gives just offence to many, and evokes, upon the system he adopts, a censure which would more correctly be applied to his own abuse of that system.



## CHAPTER VI.

“ Sit quidvis simplex duntaxat et unum.”—HORACE.



CICERO recognizes the following *quinque quasi membra eloquentiæ*: — the selection and arrangement of the subject-matter, the clothing it in suitable language, the charging the whole upon the memory, and lastly, the delivery of the speech so prepared with appropriate gesture and elocution.\*

The course to be adopted by a speaker, as by a traveller, is, first, to decide what point he wishes to make for, and then to set about finding the readiest means of arriving at it. Many speakers resemble the men of an exploring party, in a newly settled country, who have no particular object in view; as long as they do but get over a certain amount of ground, they are careless as to the direction they may have taken, and are not much surprised if they find at last that they have been walking in a circle, and have arrived at the very spot from which they originally started: on the other hand, a good speaker may be compared to a native of the same country, who, striking unhesitatingly into the right path,

\* *Invenire quid dicas, inventa disponere, deinde ornare verbis, post memoriæ mandare, tum ad extremum agere ac pronuntiare.*



never once pauses or turns aside until he attain the object of his journey.

Absurd as it may seem, experience would lead us to believe that a large number, even of those who speak after considerable preparation, never clearly decide in their own minds the exact purpose which their speech is to effect; the consequence of which is, that, having neither method nor concentration, they fritter away, in slight skirmishes, and it may be in trivial successes, opportunities and resources which, if rightly used, would have enabled them at once to strike a decisive blow.

Such men generally excel, more or less, in that style of speaking which Mr. Addison has humourously denominated "high nonsense." "Your high nonsense," he says, "blusters, and makes a noise, it stalks upon hard words, and rattles through polysyllables. It is loud and sonorous, smooth and periodical. It has something in it like manliness and force, and makes one think of the name of Sir Hercules Nonsense in the play called the Nest of Fools. In a word, your high nonsense has a majestic appearance, and wears a most tremendous gait, like Æsop's ass clothed in a lion's skin."\* The pecu-

\* "Low nonsense is the talent of a cold phlegmatic temper, that in a poor dispirited style creeps along servilely through darkness and confusion. A writer of this complexion gropes his way softly amongst self-contradictions and grovels in absurdities."

"Hudibras has defined nonsense (as Cowley does wit) by negatives. 'Nonsense,' (says he) 'is that which is neither true nor false. These two great properties of nonsense, which are always essential to it, give it such peculiar advantage over all other writings, that it is incapable of being either answered or contradicted. It stands upon its own basis like a

liar characteristic of this "high nonsense" he shows to be that the speaker without really having any meaning *seems* to have it, and so imposes upon the hearers by the range and sound of his words, that they are apt to fancy they signify something ; a deceit, he says, which is only to be detected by those who lie under this delusion asking themselves what they have learnt from it. Let a speaker, however, only apply this test to himself, and throughout the whole course of his preparation keep prominently before his mind the lesson which he really wishes to convey, and he will hardly fail to see, at a glance, what portions of his subject-matter are superfluous, and what parts he may with advantage enlarge upon.

It struck me, at the time, as a very significant fact, that when twelve able and gifted men of our Church were selected to conduct the first series of Exeter Hall services, every one of them chose for his text a simple *question* ; eleven of the twelve, a question contained in some half-a-dozen words, while the twelfth preacher selected a passage so familiar that

rock of adamant, secured by its natural situation against all conquests or attacks. There is no one place about it weaker than another, to favour an enemy in his approaches. The major and the minor are of equal strength. Its questions admit of no reply, and its assertions are not to be invalidated. A man may as well hope to distinguish colours in the midst of darkness, as to find out what to approve and disapprove in nonsense ; you may as well assault an army that is buried in intrenchments. If it affirms anything, you cannot lay hold of it ; or, if it denies, you cannot confute it. In a word, there are greater depths and obscurities, greater intricacies and perplexities, in an elaborate and well written piece of nonsense, than in the most abstruse and profound tract of school-divinity.' "

it would be next to impossible for it to escape the memory of any of his hearers.\*

Most persons try to remember the text, and just in proportion as they have a clear recollection of it, and a definite idea of its meaning, so will they be able to remember the general scope of a sermon. They have it in a portable shape, and can expand it at will, while the chances are, that, if a long text has been selected, many of the congregation have never throughout the whole sermon got a clear notion of what duty or what truth the preacher is endeavouring to enforce."

I once had the following criticism of a very intelligent working man retailed to me. Speaking of the sermons I had preached for two or three Sun-

\* Bishop of Carlisle :—" What saith the Scripture ?"—Rom. iv. 3.

Rev. W. Cadman :—" Can the Ethiopian change his skin ?"—Jer. xiii. 23.

Rev. C. Molyneux :—" What think ye of Christ ?"—Matt. xxii. 42.

Rev. Dr. Miller.—" And Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be ?"—John iii. 9.

Rev. J. C. Ryle :—" For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?"—Mark viii. 36, 37.

Dean of Canterbury :—" Why will ye die ?"—Ezek. xviii. 31.

Rev. R. Burgess :—" What must I do to be saved ?"—Acts xvi. 30.

Rev. Dr. McNeile :—" Who then can be saved ?"—Matt. xix. 25.

Dean of Carlisle :—" Understandest thou what thou readest ?"—Acts xviii. 30.

Rev. Hugh Stowell :—" How long halt ye between two opinions ?"—1 Kings xviii. 21.

Rev. W. W. Champneys :—" How are the dead raised up ?"—1 Cor. xv. 35.

Bishop of Ripon :—" How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?"—Heb. ii. 3.

days, he had said:—"Well, sir, I never can make out just what he's a driving at!" On looking over the criticised sermons, I confess that I was myself quite unable to tell really what I had been "driving at." It is told, if I remember right, of Sidney Smith, that he was in the habit of reading his sermons over to some of his own household, and of altering any passages which they did not seem clearly to understand. If something of the same plan were adopted by a speaker, to discover whether a person of average intelligence understood fully, not so much particular words or passages, but the general drift of the whole discourse, we might expect that the results would be highly conducive to the edification of many a congregation. If the poor were but honest enough to tell us so, or were not afraid of being thought wanting in intelligence, how often would they pass some such criticism as the above upon what we may have regarded as our most powerful appeals or most lucid explanations; nay, even amongst the more educated classes let any one try the experiment of asking his friends—say at no later period than the Sunday evening—what has been the subject of the morning sermon, what truth was explained or what lesson enforced, and the answer, in the vast majority of instances, will clearly prove that they have not only been unimpressed with the subject, but utterly ignorant of the general purport of that which they have heard. That this need not, and should not be the case, may be proved by the fact that a sermon powerfully setting forth some one great lesson of Christian truth will often be remembered for months or even years; most of us probably remember some particular sermon of

which we could give a general outline, even after the lapse of many years. Surely, then, if the same truth is enforced with only moderate power, it should be retained in the memory for some few days at least.

Now one remedy for the evil to which I have alluded is to be found in the choice and the manner of applying the text. We often hear a text chosen, the different parts of which, taken separately, lead the preacher to dwell upon two or even three entirely different subjects in one discourse, thus confusing the minds of his hearers by the variety of ideas suggested to them. Though the mere words of the text, if remembered, may enable them to trace back each argument, and they may even have admired the closeness with which the preacher apparently adhered to the subject-matter selected, yet in a few hours there will be no definite impression of what they have heard left upon their minds. Their senses may have been regaled, but their consciences will not have been touched; they will not go away musing within themselves upon any one great truth of Revelation, or aroused to the importance of any one duty of practical holiness. They have had nothing definite given them to believe, nothing to do.\*

The man who shall strive after the *simplex et unum* in his style of preaching will have both to curb his fancy in writing and also to bestow infinitely more labour upon it. He must often be content to lose in apparent brilliancy that which he gains in solid strength—he must often sacrifice the variety of colour and charm of contrast for the soberness of the single hue. He will be seeking to work

\* The above refers, of course, to preaching as distinct from expounding scripture.

conviction in the few rather than admiration in the many. To some he will often appear tedious. The lovers of mere mental excitement, expecting to have a panorama of new and striking ideas passed in rapid review before them, will not willingly be made to dwell upon the details and less easily appreciate beauties of some one truth, even though it had better claims to be considered a master-piece both in subject and in treatment.

Again, more labour will have to be bestowed upon the composition, because to deal fully with one subject requires much more thought than to treat three or four cursorily; every man knows intuitively that he is likely to fall short of matter; and, that he may convey the idea to his hearers, that he is simply trying to say all that can be said upon the subject; there can be no surer way of tiring an audience than this.

To obviate these difficulties, a preacher would probably arrange the materials of his sermons some time beforehand, continually reading anything which may bear upon them, and writing down under their several heads any ideas which may occur to him.\* Should he then interfere with his previous arrangement, it will only be when some fresh subject has struck him very forcibly, and he is anxious not to let the first vivid impression of it pass from his mind. In this way many of the crude ideas which first suggest themselves in connection with a subject will be seen to be such. A man viewing

\* We are told of some celebrated writer who would rise and strike a light and note down any thought which had struck him, even in the middle of the night, rather than run the risk of its escaping from his memory before the morning.

them more *ab extrâ* will often be saved from expressing that which he would afterwards be glad to recall. Add to this, that, as I have before shown, after he has once written, however concisely, upon a subject, it will from that very fact have assumed a more definite shape in his mind. His previous conceptions amplifying themselves, and fresh thoughts continually occurring, he will be less likely to weary his hearers by a perpetual recurrence of the same cycle of ideas. This, then, seems the first thing for the preacher to aim at—to select a text which shall be easily remembered, and shall embody the leading ideas of the lesson to be enforced; however varied the arguments, illustrations, and examples, they will all, like the spokes of a wheel, come to one centre, and be within one circumference.

Passing over many other points connected with the choice of subject-matter, as having no peculiar bearing upon the preparation for extempore speaking, a remark may be made upon a point which, however obvious, is too often neglected—the absolute necessity of rejecting everything which may tend to make an address exceed the proper limits, and which may not be absolutely necessary to the argument. As long as a man is keeping close to his point, and manifestly leading his hearers on by as rapid steps as possible, he will be listened to with patience and generally with interest; but, if during any part of his harangue he has indulged in tropes and figures, similes or anecdotes, which have occupied the time without materially hastening the *dénouement*, the pleasure with which they may have been at first received will be more than counterbalanced by annoyance at the loss of time they



have occasioned ;—an annoyance akin to that felt by a traveller, who, having been seduced from his direct route by the beauties of the surrounding scenery, arrives at his destination an hour too late for dinner.

As to the time for which a speaker may generally calculate upon retaining the attention of his hearers, if it is allowable to hazard a rule which might, I believe, be of universal application, and tend to preserve that amity of feeling which ought ever to exist between a speaker and his audience, we should say, as Aristotle said of the length of a sentence, that a speech should neither be *too long* nor *too short* ; that it will be *too short, if it be shorter, too long, if it be longer, than the hearers anticipated.*



## CHAPTER VII.

“Tantum series juncturaque pollet.”—HORACE.



CLERGYMAN having taken some pains to draw from an aged parishioner an opinion as to the effect which his extempore sermons produced upon her, received the following answer:—“Oh, sir, I do like to hear you speak like that; for if I can't tell what you say the first time, you always say it three or four times over, and then I do!” Now the secret of this man's success was that he kept to his point; his fault, that he did it clumsily; and this can only be avoided by the speaker having grasped a clearly arranged plan in his own mind. He must have all the divisions and subdivisions of his subject clearly before him; and however closely these may bear upon the main point, they must each be represented by a distinct idea in his own mind; everything which is said should have its own appropriate place in some division of the whole plan, and that very appropriateness will serve to fix it upon the memory, and prevent its intruding itself at the wrong time.

So much has been written upon the rhetorical arrangement of a subject that it would be presumptuous to attempt to offer any further suggestions.

All that is wished is to show that, if such arrangement is of the greatest advantage in ordinary writing, it is positively indispensable in the preparation for extempore speaking. The advantages of this clear arrangement of a subject are well explained in the following passage from "*The Spectator*:"—

"Irregularity and want of method are only supportable in men of great learning or genius, who are often too full to be exact; and, therefore, choose to throw down their pearls in heaps before the reader, rather than be at the pains of stringing them. Method is of advantage to a work both in respect to the writer and the reader. In regard to the first, it is a great help to his invention. When a man has planned his discourse, he finds a great many thoughts rising out of every head, that do not offer themselves upon the general survey of a subject. His thoughts are at the same time more intelligible, and better discover their drift and meaning, when they are placed in their proper lights, and follow one another in regular series, than when they are thrown together without order or connection. There is always an obscurity in confusion, and the same sentence that would have enlightened the reader in one part of a discourse, perplexes him in another. For the same reason, likewise, every thought in a methodical discourse shows itself in its greatest beauty, as the several figures in a piece of painting receive new grace from their disposition in the picture. The advantages of a reader from a methodical discourse are correspondent with those of the writer. He comprehends everything easily, takes it in with pleasure, and retains it long. Method is not less requisite in speaking than in writing, provided a

man would talk to make himself understood. I, who hear a thousand coffee-house debates every day, am very sensible of this want of method in the thoughts of my honest countrymen. There is not one dispute in ten which is managed in those schools of politics, where, after the three first sentences, the question is not entirely lost. Our disputants put me in mind of the skuttle-fish, that when he is unable to extricate himself, blackens all the water about him till he becomes invisible. The man who does not know how to methodise his thoughts has always, to borrow a phrase from the dispensary, a barren superfluity of words; the fruit is lost amidst the exuberance of leaves."

Without this method his previous preparation will, in fact, be of little or no avail to the speaker, and he will probably himself become hopelessly involved in the labyrinth which he had prepared for others.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“Indoctus quid enim saperet, liberque laborum,  
Rusticus urbano confusus, turpis honesto?”—HORACE.



SOME few weeks back, speaking to one of the wealthy citizens of this metropolis, I was induced, by some remarks he made, to dwell upon the origin of the difference of classes in England. To explain away his preconceived ideas, I noticed the effects of the Norman Conquest, and the consequent distinction between the Norman and Saxon races. How far I succeeded in making myself understood will appear from the following answer—given in a somewhat hesitating voice, and after due deliberation:—“Has the Norman *race* got anything to do with the *Derby*? The nobility certainly seem to take a great interest in it!” Alas, for my theory, and the hopeless confusion of ideas to which it had given rise!

If, then, the fact of his education having been totally neglected could render a shrewd, intelligent, and most prosperous man of business so incapable of following an explanation, however awkwardly given, of a simple historical fact, what must be the case with the uneducated *poor*—especially with the poor in agricultural districts, where their occupa-

tions and associations have all a tendency to cloud, rather than to enlighten, the intellect?

It is quite possible, then, that a speaker may select and arrange his subject-matter well, and yet, by adhering to a style of writing which education has rendered natural to him, may fail in making the slightest impression upon his hearers. The meaning of sentence after sentence may be lost to them, partly by the mode of expression, and partly by the use of words, which, however familiar to an educated person, may yet convey no meaning at all to the great majority of every mixed audience.

Undoubtedly, the great danger of extempore speaking is that a man may degenerate into a mere common-place mode of expression—into what is generally termed a colloquial style; on the other hand, most men in writing are apt at first to be caught by the tinsel of mere high-flown language: so that it seems a fair inference that a man who is writing and speaking alternately will most readily acquire the happy medium.

In making this remark, however, upon the style of writing, we must, I think, allow that, judging from some of our best authors, a somewhat ambitious mode of expression seems almost a necessary step in the progressive acquirement of a pure and elegant diction.

It would be easy to quote numberless instances of men of great eminence in authorship in whose earlier works there is to be found the greatest turgidity and pedantry of expression, while, as their judgment and taste have become more matured, they have gradually lost the bombast, but retained the dignity and perspicuity which had before been overlaid;

whereas, on the other hand, many who have at first written in simple and dignified language have degenerated at times into a common-place style, just as offensive to good taste as the opposite extreme. If the correctness of these remarks be allowed, it follows that as the style of writing has a natural tendency to accommodate itself to ordinary every-day forms of expression, rather than to rise above them, we should not, as beginners, be too careful to avoid a style which, from being slightly verbose, might justly give offence in writers of greater experience.

There is a paper in "The Spectator," on the character of Heroic Poetry, which is so singularly in point that I shall offer no apology for transcribing it. It comes not only with the sanction which its place in the great model of English writing gives it, but it is in strict and almost *verbatim* accordance with the maxims given by the greatest of all classic authorities. It runs thus:—

"It is requisite that the language should be both perspicuous and sublime; in proportion as either of these two qualities are wanting the language is imperfect. Perspicuity is the first and most necessary qualification, insomuch that a good-natured reader sometimes overlooks a little slip even in the grammar or syntax, where it is impossible for him to mistake the poet's sense.\* *E. g.*

‘ God and his Son except,  
Created thing nought valued He nor shunn’d.’  
MILTON.

\* So Horace:—

‘ Ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis  
Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,  
Aut humana parum cavit natura.’

“ If clearness and perspicuity were only to be consulted, the poet would have nothing else to do but to clothe his thoughts in the most plain and natural expressions; but, since it often happens that the *most obvious phrases, and those which are used in ordinary conversation, become too familiar to the ear, and contract a kind of meanness by passing through the mouths of the vulgar, a poet should take particular care to guard himself against idiomatic ways of speaking.* Ovid and Lucan have many poornesses of expression upon this account; as taking up with the first phrases that occur without putting themselves to the trouble of looking after such as would not only have been natural, but also elevated and sublime. Milton has but few failings of this kind, of which, however, you may meet with some instances, as in the following passages:—

‘ ——— A while discourse they hold,  
No fear lest dinner cool; when thus began,’ &c. &c.

‘ Who of all ages to succeed, but, feeling  
The evil on Him brought by me, will curse  
My head, ill fare our Ancestor impure;  
For this we may thank Adam.’

“ The great masters in composition know very well *that many an elegant phrase becomes improper for a poet or an orator when it has been debased by common use.* For this reason the works of ancient authors, which are written in dead languages, have a great advantage over those which are written in languages that are now spoken. Were there any mean phrases or idioms in Virgil and Homer they would not strike the ear of the most delicate modern reader so much as they would that of an old Greek



or Roman, *because we never hear them pronounced in our streets or in ordinary conversation.*

“ It is not, therefore, sufficient that our language be perspicuous, unless it be also sublime. To this end it ought to deviate from the common forms and ordinary phrases of speech. Our judgment will very much discover itself in *shunning the common roads of expression, without falling into such ways of speech as may seem stiff and unnatural.* Among the Greeks, Æschylus, and sometimes Sophocles, were guilty of this fault. Among the Latins, Claudius and Statius ; and among our own countrymen, Shakespeare and Lee. In these authors the affectation of greatness often hurts the perspicuity of the style, as in many others the endeavour after perspicuity prejudices its greatness.”

Applicable as the above is to all speaking, it seems to apply specially to preaching.

There is a very perceptible tendency in the present day to identify *practical preaching* with a common-place familiar mode of expression. Thus we find that many right-minded persons would rather forego the advantage which they allow to belong to a plain, practical exhortation, than submit to have their sense of propriety shocked by the flagrant breaches of good taste which such preaching is then made to involve. How far this evil is a necessary consequence of plain speaking the above quotation will, I think, enable us to judge.

Aristotle, in the few last chapters of his “ Poetics,” gives many useful and practical rules on this subject ; and his advice, as to the use of foreign words or of expressions appropriated from their more ordinary meaning, will be current in any age. If,



he says, they are used sparingly, and with discrimination, they give sublimity and majesty to a discourse; otherwise they make the whole barbarous. Homer, he says, often introduces expressions peculiar to the idioms of the neighbouring states; and thus, he observes, some of his most forcible allusions would only be understood by his contemporaries. The pleasure which such terms give to the ear he shows to be analogous to the gratification which the sight of a stranger gives to the eye, and the authority with which a stranger's opinion often impresses the mind.

With regard to the grouping of words into sentences, nearly all that can be said on the subject may be embraced in one or two rules from the same author—that a sentence shall neither fall short of, nor exceed, the length which its construction would lead the hearer to expect; and, again, that it should be so simple in its structure, that an ordinary person would have no difficulty in reading, pointing, and understanding it.

The following description of the style of writing peculiar to the present day will, I think, more especially apply to the case of those whose writing is preparatory for extempore or *memoriter* speaking.

“The good writer of the present day always seems to write under a degree of excitement. He is full of his subject, and his attention is directed to what he shall say, rather than to the manner of conveying his thoughts. His expressions have an air of originality about them. There is no toilsome selection of words, no laboured composition of sentences, no high-wrought ornaments, but the words, and sentences, and ornaments, are such as most na-

aturally and obviously present themselves to the excited mind. If one word is more expressive of his meaning than another, he does not fear to use it, though it may never have been introduced to such good company before. If a form of sentence occurs to him which is more easy and idiomatic, he adopts it, and stops not to inquire whether it end in a trisyllable or a monosyllable. If a figurative expression strikes him as pertinent and happy, he uses it, and leaves it for others to inquire whether it be found in the numbers of 'The Spectator,' and have the authority of classical writers for its support. In short, instead of imitating the style of any other writer as his guide, he has a style of his own, and observes the maxim of Horace in the literal use of the term :—

'Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri!' \* \*

The style here described is peculiarly suited for extempore speaking, not only because slight verbal inaccuracies are less easily detected than in a written composition, but because a greater freedom and breadth of thought and language are required in speaking than writing; what seems to be pedantic or wildly hyperbolic in an address to a single person is perfectly appropriate when addressed to a large number of persons—just as in a picture,

"Erit, quæ si propius stes,  
Te capiet magis, et quædam si longius abstes."

It may be a question, however, whether there is not great danger in adopting this style of writing for general composition, and whether any revision

\* Newman's Rhetoric, sixth edition, p. 203.


will get rid of the evidence of a careless and hasty, though impassioned, manner of writing.

If, therefore, this style of composition be adopted, as peculiarly appropriate for extempore speaking, the inevitable effect of it must be counteracted by greater care in writing for other purposes. After all it is his *taste* which a man must try to improve, and this he can only do by an accurate study of good writers.

## CHAPTER IX.

“ Massillon, when asked which of his sermons he thought the best, replied, ‘ That which I *recollect* the best.’ ”

LIFE OF MASSILLON.

N these days, when a man is liable to have every word he utters taken down and commented upon, and to be held answerable for particular expressions, just as much as for the general drift of his argument, there are few persons, probably, who will doubt the great advantage of being able to prepare *verbatim* what may have to be said on any particular occasion. If this be so under ordinary circumstances, much more will it be the case with the Christian minister, who must necessarily deal with subjects that require the very greatest accuracy of expression, and who is continually in danger of giving a wrong impression of his meaning, or of falling below the dignity of the subjects which he has taken in hand.

To pass over many more obvious cases in which this power of *memoriter* speaking will be required, in the case of metaphor or simile it will be especially useful; as, if a speaker does not wish to run the risk of getting hopelessly confused, or of very inadequately expressing his meaning, he must clearly

foresee where such figures of speech will lead him, and how far he may press them into his service; besides which, in many of the most expressive analogies taken from everyday life, the greatest care is required to prevent the language used calling up ideas not at all suited to the subject they are intended to illustrate.

That *memoriter* speaking is at first both difficult and laborious we do not for a moment deny; but we assert that it is much less so than those who may have given it up on the first attempt can well imagine. There is not, perhaps, a greater difference between the ease and rapidity of touch in a finished musician, and the absurd awkwardness of the same person during the first few weeks of his novitiate in the art, than there is between the difficulty which a man will first experience in committing written matter to memory, and the facility which he will acquire by a few months' practice.

There are, however, great and we cannot but think unfounded prejudices against *memoriter* speaking; the unreality and deception which it is supposed to involve can only exist where the audience are unacquainted with the most rudimental principles of the orator's art. Many men, if they have thought upon a subject, cannot help speaking more or less from memory, particularly those who, if I may so express it, have acquired the habit of thinking in sentences. Just, in fact, as a person who has thought over an important letter will know, almost word for word, what he intends to write before he puts pen to paper. Seeing, then, it is impossible to draw any line, and to say where the supposed deception finds place, the objections, if admitted at all,

would hold good as regards all preparation for speaking—which is manifestly absurd.

It is not intended by these remarks to advocate *memoriter* speaking as a general rule, but rather to show that the power of so speaking is a necessary part of an orator's training; nor, indeed, is it to be supposed that in the expression (*mandare memoriæ*) quoted above, Cicero implies that an actual *verbatim* acquaintance with the matter prepared is requisite, but rather that the general scope of the whole should be clearly comprehended; that, in fact, the orator should study it not as a mathematician would the formulas of his science, but rather as a painter would study the general features of a landscape. We might go further and show that, just as in studying a landscape a day or even an hour will be of more avail to a skilful artist than a week to an amateur, so in the study of his written compositions, one hour, after a fair amount of practice, will do for the speaker what six would hardly have accomplished without it. Although, at first, he has to study every part in all its details, he very soon learns to seize intuitively upon the prominent ideas and even words, trusting to their subordinates being dictated by the inspiration of the moment, and naturally grouping themselves around them. Like the artist, he knows that though great accuracy may be required in bringing out some particular parts of his subject, yet that his taste will generally be shown not so much by a servile imitation, as by the boldness with which he conceives and reproduces the whole.

Without considerable skill in the art, speaking *entirely* from memory has a very bad effect. A

man does not speak with any freedom, point, or force; the idea of a formal recitation is so irresistibly conveyed to his hearers that, though his words will be listened to, they will never come home like the words of an earnest, natural speaker; his eloquence, however great it may be, will suffer as much from his defective oratory as a fine song from a faulty execution. His whole delivery will be bad, there will be no light or shade, but one tone and manner throughout: argument, narrative, threatening, rebuke, encouragement, will all be the same; while the occasional sudden transitions from highly oratorical language to mere ordinary remark will often be so abrupt and unexpected as entirely to take off the mind from the matter to the manner. Such a speaker is like a bold but unskilful rider crossing an enclosed country; there is none of the quiet ease and grace, the steadiness, nerve, and masterly handling of one more practised; he is all excitement, and hurries on to the end with rash impetuosity, not only without the slightest appreciation of the ground he traverses, but often labouring as much at the smallest obstacles as when he should gather himself together for some bold, decisive, and crowning effort.

Again, the *memoriter* speaker generally rejoices in long poetical quotations and laboured combinations of words, the effect of which is particularly unfortunate, being sufficient of itself to keep up the feeling in the hearer that he is merely listening to a formal recitation. If the speaker is not aware of his faults, they are liable to become habitual; so that even when he is really speaking on the impulse of the moment he will fall into the same style,



and thus lose the effect generally incidental to extempore speaking.

One difficulty attending *memoriter* speaking is, that the attention is likely to be concentrated upon words and periods rather than upon the whole subject, so that often on coming to the end of a sentence the speaker will have lost the thread of his argument, and there will be a total blank presented to his mind. He will be much in the same position as that often indicated in conversation by the familiar exclamation: "What in the world was I talking about!" This difficulty must be met either by copious notes, or, better still, by the power of "extemporising," which, enabling him to enlarge for a few moments on the last idea which he has put forward, will give him time for thought, and infallibly recall to his mind the lost thread of his argument.

Under these circumstances, the great thing will be for the speaker, having anticipated the probability of such an occurrence, to retain perfect self-possession, and not to let his audience perceive that he is at a loss; inasmuch as if he once makes his hearers nervous, their nervousness will infallibly react upon himself, and thus increase his difficulty tenfold. The best way, however, to avoid falling into such a dilemma at all will be for the speaker to abandon himself to his subject, and to make even his *memoriter* speaking, in some sort, a spontaneous effort; \* if what he has previously written and

\* The great difficulty of speaking when actually tied down to a particular form of words is shown by the fact of many extempore preachers, and even those who have the power of *memoriter* speaking, being quite unable to repeat any of the Collects or Prayers in the Church Service, or, at times, even the Lord's Prayer, without a book before them. The fear of



studied has been expressed in simple and natural language, it will then be difficult for him to help reproducing it in nearly the same terms. Not so, however, if he has indulged in mere rhetorical ornament or loose unconnected argument; in this case the effort must necessarily be a purely mechanical one, and proportionally difficult and hazardous.

By thus, in a measure, combining the two methods of speaking, an orator will ultimately gain the ease and freedom of a natural delivery, and the power, order, and connection of a written discourse. He will be able to judge, within a very few minutes, of the time that his subject will occupy him; and should he be led to enlarge upon any particular portions of his argument, he will proportionately condense that which is to follow. He will handle his subject as a master; he will travel on as upon a road he is familiar with, and his own manifest assurance will not fail to have its influence upon his hearers, and lead them, in the end, to trust implicitly to his guidance.

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That the sort of mental brick-making without straw, which so many persons understand by extempore speaking, is a process almost unknown to the world's best orators we have abundant proof. The following notes of a Lecture by the late Mr. Robertson of Brighton, published after his death,

repeating the words incorrectly does in reality prevent them thoroughly feeling what they say, and prevents them uttering those words which would flow spontaneously under other circumstances.

will give a good idea of the minimum of preparation which will enable most men to express themselves as they would wish on any public occasion.

Those who may have known Mr. Robertson's singular force and felicity of expression, his concentration, and even condensation of ideas, and the power which he invariably exercised on the minds of his hearers, will regard the authority of his example in this matter as second to none in modern times.

"I am here to-night through the invitation of your kind friends, with no right but that of unfeigned interest in every institution like yours.

"The subject I had proposed was the Progress of Society. I changed it for that of the Working Classes. But even this is too full of pretension. Nevertheless, the mere fact of my standing here to-night is full of significance. More so than railways or electric telegraphs. That so many of the Working Classes should come here after a hard day's work is very significant. It proves the growing victory of the spirit over the animal: that the lower life of toil and animal indulgence is getting to be reckoned as not the *all* of man. It shows, too, that the Working Classes are becoming conscious of their own destinies, &c. &c."

The notes for the whole Lecture are as full and accurate as the above, and show how thoroughly his subject, even for a village Lecture, was thought out and arranged.

## CHAPTER X.

“Where I have come, great clerks have purposed  
To greet me with premeditated welcomes ;  
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,  
Make periods in the midst of sentences,  
Throttle their practised accents in their fears,  
And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,  
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,  
Out of this silence, yet, I picked a welcome ;  
And in the modesty of fearful duty  
I read as much, as from the rattling tongue  
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.  
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity,  
In least speak most, to my capacity.”

SHAKESPEARE, *Midsummer Night's Dream*.



HERE is,” says Mr. Addison, “a sort of elegant distress to which ingenuous minds are the most liable, and which may, therefore, deserve some remarks. Many a brave fellow who has put his enemy to flight in the field has been in the utmost disorder upon making a speech before a body of his friends at home. One would think there was some kind of fascination in the eyes of a large circle of people when darting altogether upon one person.

“It is impossible that a person should exert himself to advantage in an assembly, whether it be his part to sing or to speak, who is under too great op-

pressions of modesty. I remember, upon talking with a friend of mine concerning the force of pronunciation, our discourse led us into the enumeration of the several organs of speech which an orator should have in perfection—as the tongue, the teeth, the lips and nose, the palate, and the windpipe—upon which says my friend, you have omitted the most material organ of them all, and that is the *forehead*. But, notwithstanding that an excess of modesty obstructs the tongue and renders it unfit for its office, a due proportion of it is thought so requisite to an orator that rhetoricians have recommended it to their disciples as a particular in their art. Cicero tells us that he never liked an orator who did not appear in some little confusion at the beginning of his speech; and confesses that he himself never entered upon an oration without trembling and concern. It is, indeed, a kind of deference which is due to a great assembly, and seldom fails to raise a benevolence in the audience towards the person who speaks. A just and reasonable modesty does not only recommend eloquence, but sets off every great talent.”

Surely these remarks may afford some encouragement to those who have hitherto imagined that their constitutional nervousness was such as to render hopeless any attempts on their part at public speaking, and may lead them to feel that, as time modifies all things, so their excessive timidity will ultimately give place to a diffidence which, while it will serve as an ornament rather than a hindrance, will be the most effectual safeguard against that overbearing affectation of superiority which in-

variably offends rather than persuades an audience.

The following story, as narrated by Mr. Sheridan, in his "*Lectures on Elocution*," admirably illustrates the manner in which a man who abandons himself entirely to his subject, and speaks with real feeling, may overcome the difficulties arising from an excess of modesty, and a naturally nervous temperament.

"The Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford by virtue of his office was to address the newly elected Chancellor, in the public theatre, and in the presence of many thousand persons. He was no way remarkable for oratorical power, and this was, perhaps, the first time he found himself engaged in a scene of this kind. As he was a man of a speculative turn, he had an uncommon share, even in private company, of that awkward bashfulness which is usually attendant upon those who have much commerce with books and little with the world. Those of his acquaintance, therefore, were in pain for him, and they who knew him only by character did not expect that he would acquit himself well. But all were pleasingly disappointed; as he had no art he did not attempt to use any. He was really, and at heart, pleased with the election of the Chancellor, and expressed himself accordingly. He received him with the same air of cordial joy that a man would show on the arrival of a long-wished-for noble guest, under his roof, whose presence would make a sort of little jubilee in the family; his tones were such as result from a glad heart, his eyes sparkled with pleasure, and his whole countenance and gesture were in exact unison. No one was at leisure

to examine whether any part of his elocution might have been more graceful ; it was just, it was forcible, it moved every one. His easy, natural, and unaffected manner, which was, perhaps, scarcely ever seen before by any of his auditors in a public speaker, excited bursts of universal applause, not from prostituted hands in support of party opinion, but from hearts that felt themselves agitated by a participation of kindred feelings resulting from his manner, independent of his matter."

Our own experience would probably enable most of us to record one or more somewhat parallel instances to the above ;—instances of men who have risen under strong emotion, not to make a speech, but to express their real feelings, and who have thus at once struck the electric chain of sympathy which binds heart to heart, and instantaneously flashed their message along it, with a speed and certainty which the loftiest eloquence would in vain have attempted to rival.

It would be absurd pedantry to attempt to give any rules by which a man shall overcome his nervousness, and the dread with which he will approach each new trial of his powers. We can only say, that he must speak from a sense of duty, he must have at once a confidence in, and a doubt of, his own power ; a confidence inspired by the feeling that he has availed himself of every possible means of preparation for the task he has undertaken, and a doubt arising from a consciousness that in spite of all his labour his sufficiency must depend upon something quite external to himself. Above all, he must feel that if he does his best, it is to his own Master, and not to his hearers, that he must stand

or fall. Let him once forget this, and speak with the sole view of gratifying an audience, and his must indeed be a curiously constituted mind that is not either secretly trembling with an excess of nervousness at the fear of failure, or palpably puffed up with self-complacency at his fancied success.

## CHAPTER XI.

“ Dispute it like a man.  
I shall do so ;  
But I must also **FEEL** it like a man.”

SHAKESPEARE.

**I**T is a mistake into which many persons fall, to suppose that because a man uses words furnished to him at the moment, he will, therefore, speak with anything like oratorical propriety ; —there is ever a Scylla or a Charybdis on one side or other of the speaker. If he avoid spouting or declamation, he may become tame and spiritless, or fall into a mere colloquial style. If he fear to speak too fast, he may become tediously slow ; while, from a faulty or inarticulate pronunciation, he is in danger of being driven into a laboured and bombastic delivery ; so that, save under the most singularly favourable circumstances, it will only be with the assistance of a skilful pilot that a speaker will be able to steer safely among the various shoals and sunken reefs which beset his course.

The manner of speaking usually termed “ spouting ” is one of the many proofs that a *little* knowledge is a dangerous thing—it is almost invariably the result of a short and insufficient study of the



principles of elocution—and thus it exhibits the speaker in a sort of chrysalis state, without the in-offensiveness of the grub or the beauty of the butterfly. It arises from a speaker attempting to give force to an address without knowing how, when, or where that force is to be applied; thus words instead of being pronounced with the customary accent are “mouthed,” and two or three syllables accented instead of one; *e.g.* *inspirátion* would be pronounced *inspirátion*—*confúsió*n, *cónfusió*n—*misfór*-tune, *mísfórtú*ne—*prevént*, *prévént*; the same is done with members of sentences, scarcely any words are really subordinated, and the ear is dinned with one perpetual round of emphasized and wrongly-accented words. If the speaker would but remember that his object must ever be to pronounce words with the same accent, and sentences with the same intonation as in conversation, he would not be likely to fall into this error, and still less likely to consider that it added to the effect of what he uttered. One method of remedying these defects has often been suggested, namely—that a man should occasionally write down a few sentences of his ordinary conversation, and endeavour afterwards to read them as he would have spoken them.

Too great rapidity of utterance is one of the commonest faults in speaking, and causes many inconveniences; it is incompatible, on the part of the speaker, with coolness and self-possession, or with proper intonation, pronunciation, and general effect, and quickly fatigues all parties concerned. Deliberation, on the other hand, has not only the negative virtue of avoiding these evils, but of itself secures considerable advantages to the speaker. It

shows that he is master of his subject, and enables him, without either wearying or confusing his hearers, to carry their minds along with him, without any visible effort on their part.

Distinctness of utterance, although the only method by which a person can, without effort, make himself audible in a large building, is a point to which few speakers sufficiently attend. There must be an acquired habit of giving the full value to every letter—so far, of course, as it does not violate the conventional mode of pronouncing a word. The labials must be sounded with the lips, the dentals with the teeth, and so forth, yet, at the same time, a pedantic affectation of speaking correctly must be avoided; attention to this rule will not only enable a person to be heard, when speaking in his natural voice, but will get rid of many inelegancies of expression; *e. g.* “government” will no longer be pronounced, *govunment* — “subjects,” *subjecks*, &c. Again, the vowels will all have their proper sounds, “charity” will no longer be *charutty*—“possible,” *posserble*—“revelation,” *revullation*, &c.

The actual management of the voice in speaking is a part of the subject which, from the difficulties it involves, I would gladly have passed over; as I conceive that no practical good can, for the most part, be derived, except from the personal criticism or instruction of one who is able not only to decide when a passage is well or badly recited, but to give the reasons of, and to justify any objections he may make.

The main point is for a man continually to ask himself how he would have spoken a particular sentence in conversation, and to study to acquire the same variety of intonation which he would then have

used, being careful, however, at the same time, to avoid adopting a mere colloquial style of speaking. This practice will, in some cases, be sufficient to make up for any want of instruction; more particularly if the speaker has any friend upon whose judgment he can rely, and who will honestly tell him of his faults.

Of the different kinds of voice the bass will of all others be found the most difficult to bring under control; there seems a sort of specific gravity which, continually weighing it down, and confining it to a few deep notes constantly repeated, causes it to have a decidedly narcotic influence upon the hearers; and it is only when the speaker is entirely carried away by his subject, and gives utterance to the impassioned tones of deep feeling, that he ever realizes the power of the weapon at his disposal. Something may be done to remedy this defect by practising the higher notes of the voice in singing, and by taking care in reading, when it is more under control, to prevent it sinking too low; also, by thoroughly entering into the subject in hand, and so allowing the voice to be the exponent of every shade of feeling.

M. Bautain rightly lays great stress upon what he terms a "sympathetic voice;" he defines it as a "power of attraction which draws to it the hearer's mind, and on its accents hangs its attention." Again, he says, "it is a voice which inspires an affection for him who speaks, and puts you instinctively on his side, so that his words find an echo in the mind, repeating there what he says and reproducing it easily in the understanding and the heart."

He then goes on to show that this power arises

chiefly from the natural constitution of the vocal organs, but that it also depends upon the speaker evidently feeling that which he utters; it arises, in fact, mainly from kindly feeling and earnestness. Without the former all will be repulsive; without the latter the speaker's arguments will be like arrows shot without strength, however nicely balanced, well-feathered, and skilfully aimed, they will inevitably fall short, or drop harmlessly from the mark.

It is hardly necessary to add that these suggestions refer to practice in the study, and that in actual speaking there must be an entire spontaneity of effort, the result of previous study. Thus, though a man may not speak well, he will not offend by his manner, because he will always do that which at the time is natural to him.

## CHAPTER XII.

“ *Cæteræ partes loquentem adjuvant; manus prope est ut dicam ipsæ loquuntur. His poscimus, pollicemur, vocamus, dimittimus, miramur, supplicamus, abominamur; gaudium, tristitiam, dubitationem, confessionem, penitentiam, modum, copiam, numerum, tempus ostendimus.*”—QUINTILIAN.



OST foreign writers,” to quote Mr. Addison again, “ who have given any character of the English nation, whatever vices they ascribe to it, allow, in general, that the people are naturally modest. It proceeds, perhaps, from this our national virtue, that our orators are observed to make use of less gesture or action than those of other countries. Our preachers stand stock still in the pulpit, and will not so much as move a finger to set off the best sermons in the world. We meet with the same speaking statues at the bar, and in all public places of debate. Our words flow from us in a smooth, continued stream, without those strainings of the voice, motions of the body, and majesty of the hand, which are so much celebrated in the orators of Greece and Rome. We can talk of life and death in cold blood, and keep our temper in a discourse which turns upon everything that is dear to us. Though our zeal breaks out in the finest tropes and figures, it is not able to stir a limb about us. I have heard it observed more than once, by those who have seen

Italy, that an untravelled Englishman cannot relish all the beauties of Italian pictures, because the postures which are expressed in them are often such as are peculiar to that country. One who has not seen an Italian in the pulpit will not know what to make of that noble gesture in Raphael's picture of St. Paul preaching at Athens, where the Apostle is represented as lifting up both his arms, pouring out the thunder of his rhetoric amidst an audience of pagan philosophers. It is certain that proper gestures and vehement exertions of the voice cannot be too much studied by a public orator. They are a kind of comment upon what he utters, and enforce everything he says, with weak hearers, better than the strongest argument he can make use of. They keep the audience awake, and fix their attention to what is delivered to them, at the same time that they show the speaker is in earnest, and affected himself with what he so passionately recommends to others. Violent gesture and vociferation naturally shake the hearts of the ignorant, and fill them with a kind of religious horror. Nothing is more frequent than to see women weep and tremble at the sight of a moving preacher, though he is placed quite out of hearing; as in England we very frequently see people lulled to sleep with solid and elaborate discourses of piety, who would be warmed and transported out of themselves by the bellowings and distortions of enthusiasm. If nonsense, when accompanied with such an emotion of voice and body, has such an influence on men's minds, what might we not expect from many of those admirable discourses which are printed in our tongue, were they delivered with a becoming fervour, and with the most agreeable graces of voice and gesture!

“ We are told that the great Latin orator very much impaired his health by this *laterum contentio*, this vehemence of action, with which he used to deliver himself.

“ The Greek orator was likewise so very famous for this particular in rhetoric, that one of his antagonists, whom he had banished from Athens, reading over the oration which had procured his banishment, and seeing his friends admire it, could not forbear asking them, if they were so much affected by the bare reading of it, how much more they would have been alarmed, had they heard him actually throwing out such a storm of eloquence !

“ How cold and dead a figure, in comparison of these two great men, does an orator often make at the British bar, holding up his head with the most insipid serenity, and stroking the sides of a long wig that reaches down to his middle ! The truth of it is there is often nothing more ridiculous than the gestures of an English speaker ; you see some of them running their hands into their pockets as far as ever they can thrust them, and others looking with great attention on a piece of paper that has nothing written on it. You may see many a smart rhetorician turning his hat in his hands, moulding it into several different cocks, examining sometimes the lining of it, and sometimes the bottom, during the whole course of his harangue. A deaf man would think he was cheapening a beaver, when, perhaps, he is talking of the fate of the British nation. I remember, when I was a young man, and used to frequent Westminster Hall, there was a counsellor who never pleaded without a piece of packthread in his hand, which he used to twist



about a thumb or a finger, all the while he was speaking: the wags of those days used to call it the thread of his discourse, for he was not able to utter a word without it. One of his clients, who was more merry than wise, stole it from him one day in the midst of his pleading, but he had better have left it alone, for he lost his cause by his jest.”\*

Appropriate gesture in speaking arises from the mind either anticipating some forcible expression, or finding words on the spur of the moment inadequate fully to convey its meaning. This at once accounts for the fact of so few persons, when reading from the pages of a written composition, having the power of enforcing their words by this apparently most simple and natural expedient. For in reading the mind is generally keeping pace pretty evenly with the written matter, oftener lagging behind than outstripping it; whilst the words spoken invariably precede the mental conception. Thus the gesture of readers is often governed by the very reverse of the rule of nature. When they are unexcited and treating of a comparatively unimportant part of their subject they use action; but when sufficiently impressed with it to forget themselves they are perfectly motionless, showing at once what is natural to them under such circumstances. The reader may, however, by practice acquire the habit of occasionally enforcing or helping out his words by his action, though to do this without effort will require him to be able to merge the reader in the speaker to an extent which is attainable by very few.

*Memoriter* speaking, so long as it is entirely a

\* Addison's Works, by Bishop Hurd, vol. III. p. 385.



mental effort, is almost necessarily unaccompanied by action, the mind being so concentrated upon words as to paralyze every other power, and it is only as the subject more entirely possesses the speaker, and the prepared words or others in their place come spontaneously, that he begins to enforce his meaning by gesture.

Again, many men speak in the manner described by Mr. Addison, partly from a naturally unexcitable temperament, and partly from having acquired the habit during their earlier efforts at public speaking. Though they may have overcome the first painful nervousness there is still a *mauvaise honte*, which effectually checks their natural ardour, and the fear of unpleasantly concentrating attention upon themselves has prevented them using even their natural action easily and naturally.

The extempore speaker should avoid any ungainly habits or inappropriate gestures; and then he is most likely, after a while, to accompany his words with that natural explanation or emphatic gesture which will alone be of any real service.

If it is allowable to supplement the memorable *dictum* which gives the first, second, and third place in oratory to action, we should add, that such action must always be a spontaneous effort on the part of the speaker, and simply the result of a desire to explain or enforce his meaning.\* Assumed or laboured action is like rouge to the cheek; an absence of the glow of health would pass unnoticed, but the assumption of that which is unnatural cannot fail to be detected, and is sure to excite the severest animadver-

\* The elocution requisite for a good delivery will be considered under the subject of reading.

sion. Yet, at the same time, it would be as absurd to blame a person for taking the necessary steps to acquire a natural and graceful mode of delivery as for adopting precautional or remedial measures to ensure the return of the natural glow of health.

Believing as we do that the common sense and good taste of our countrymen will be quite a sufficient safeguard against public speaking ever degenerating into mere acting, we cannot but hope that there will soon be a marked improvement in this particular of English oratory.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“Delectando pariterque monendo.”—HORACE.



HERE is no more satisfactory evidence of the advancement in general intelligence and of the increasing taste for more rational amusement and recreation than the Mechanics' Institutes and those kindred societies which, in some sort or other, are found in all the towns, and in not a few of the villages, of our land. Their influence, however, being negative rather than positive is seldom fully appreciated; for though prevention is proverbially better than cure, yet so much at variance is theory with practice that those who ward off an evil are seldom, if ever, counted worthy of the reward of those who relieve us from its actual pressure. Not only, however, do these institutions keep young men from that “sight of means to do ill deeds” which “makes ill deeds done,” but throwing around them the safeguard, and stimulating them with the prestige of a certain position to be maintained in society, and at the same time rendering them amenable to a code of morals and opinions infinitely higher than they could otherwise be subject to—they tend in many ways, over and above their more manifest

means of working, greatly to raise the tone of a large and important class of the community.

When, therefore, we remember that these societies depend mainly upon the support received in the shape of lectures, we see at once how strong an inducement is thus held out to men of education to acquire the power of imparting their knowledge in an agreeable manner, and why also this subject of "lecturing" should claim some especial notice in such a work as the present.

There is, however, a less disinterested motive which may weigh with those who wish to qualify themselves as speakers. Like many another well meant action, it will be found to react as beneficially upon the doer as it acted in the first instance on the recipient. The more easy and familiar style involved, the greater indulgence extended to every defect, and the licence usually allowed of combining reading with speaking, conjoin to make the lecture-room a peculiarly appropriate field for exercising and developing the powers of the future orator.

Much has of late been said as to the propriety and feasibility of systematically giving lectures on familiar topics in *agricultural* parishes. Having myself, during one winter, given a weekly lecture of this sort in a country village, I can entirely endorse the opinions which have been expressed as to the good effects these are likely to produce. The merging, for the time, of petty social distinctions and religious differences, the promotion of cordiality and good feeling, the facility for uniting opposing interests in any plan of general improvement, and the constant opportunity of speaking a word in season upon any questions of local or immediate

interest, are all practical advantages which belong to the system over and above those directly resulting from it.

To those who may be willing to try the experiment, a winter's experience as to the *modus operandi* and its general results may prove of some service. The population of the village in question numbered about 300 ; the only available room was the school-room, not one of the most modern or convenient, but capable, on an emergency, of accommodating about seventy or eighty persons. The first subject was entitled " Dreams and Dreamers ; " but, though the stars seemed in every way propitious, the audience did not arrive ! At last, with one or two personal friends, we mustered about half-a-dozen persons, by whom an abstract of the proposed lecture was patiently listened to for some half hour or more. The following week, with the same subject announced, there was a fair muster, perhaps from thirty to forty adults ; this, during the whole time, was probably as nearly as possible the average ; one or two more popular subjects gathering an uncomfortably full attendance. The course of lectures culminated in two readings from Shakespeare ; after which nothing was very thoroughly appreciated, and in the beginning of May they were of course discontinued.

One of the details of management may prove useful to others similarly situated. To avoid the confusion consequent upon many persons coming in late, or the disadvantages of a want of punctuality, the first ten minutes or quarter of an hour was devoted to glee-singing ; the school-children, and one or two ladies, who kindly assisted, bearing the chief

burden of this part of the proceedings, though they were often materially aided by those of the young men in the village, who would avail themselves of the instruction of a certain harmonious blacksmith, a veteran ex-member of a cathedral choir; while, if any friend was willing to vary the programme with a song, it was held to be perfectly orthodox. Without saying anything as to the artistic merits of the general performance on these occasions, I can testify to the extreme usefulness of this plan, both in evoking all the latent musical talent, and indirectly in creating an interest in the musical portions of the church service, while for its immediate purpose it answered admirably. The one great mistake of the whole management, and which would probably have told fatally after the novelty had entirely worn off, was having the lecture every week instead of every fortnight. Not only would the interest have been better sustained by this change, but the intervening day would have served as a practising evening for the choir; whereas it is next to impossible to get any number of persons to give up two evenings of the week with any regularity.

To those who have agreed with my theory of acquiring and exercising the power of speaking, the plan I adopted for carrying on such lectures will, at least, seem to have the advantage of gaining in simplicity what it wanted in dignity. The subjects chosen were generally lighter than those which are usually considered appropriate for a lecture-room. My plan was to devote the morning of the day to the purpose; and, having selected some popular book, to glance through it, marking the most useful and interesting portions; thus getting a general

view of some of the leading features, I trusted to help out the subject-matter so obtained by the portions previously marked for reading. Travels, biographical sketches, and any details of colonial life, were readily appreciated; also, historical subjects founded on such books as "Ivanhoe," "Prescott's Mexico" and "Peru," &c. Nothing, however, proved so generally popular as readings from Shakespeare; explaining the allusions, describing manners and customs and places, and here and there narrating some historical or other event connected with the play, together with occasional remarks naturally arising out of the subject, served to prevent the reading becoming tedious, while, by simplifying the plot of the original, the whole was easily comprehended, even by the youngest portions of the audience.

The plan of making reading and lecturing go hand in hand was, I believe, advocated by Mr. Brockfield, in his lecture on "reading aloud," at the South Kensington Museum; and I think that all who may ever have tried this method will agree that it is both the best, the easiest, and the most expeditious mode of preparing a lecture, and at the same time one which affords the greatest opportunity of combining the *utile* with the *dulce* in tolerably fair proportions.

However this may be, this plan of lecturing is certainly the best method for a man to adopt who, though he may be quite equal to giving any short explanations, narrating simple facts, or making cursory remarks, may not wish to trust entirely to his own powers; such an one, whilst he relieves his audience from the weariness with which any lengthened reading is invariably listened to, and caters for

them according to the best of his then ability, will not only be fitting himself to be of greater service to them at some future day, but will gain the power of contributing at will to the pleasure and social improvement of those amongst whom his lot may at any time be cast.



## CHAPTER XIV.

“Lives of great men all remind us  
We may make our lives sublime;  
And, departing, leave behind us,  
Footprints in the sand of time.  
Footprints which perhaps another,  
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, may take heart again.”—LONGFELLOW.



EARLY four centuries ago a youthful artist\* stood spell-bound before a master-piece of the immortal Raphael; at last, as his awe and reverence for the mighty genius which could so conceive and execute deepened upon him, and as his heart thrilled responsively to every thought and feeling there portrayed, he broke forth in proud humility with the ever-memorable exclamation—“I too am a painter.” Unknown to fame as he then was, oppressed with poverty, and debarred from every chance of instruction, instead of being crushed with a sense of his own inferiority, he rose, with a spirit worthy even of a nobler cause, above every petty consideration, and felt his heart kindle with emotion at the thought that he, too, was called by the same honoured name.

There must be a kindred spirit to this animating

\* Corregio.

the future orator as he studies the great masterpieces of ancient and modern eloquence. He, too, must feel that his vocation, in the strictest sense of the term, is the same; and though he may never hope to attain to the goal of excellence at which others have arrived, he will yet rejoice to walk as a humble follower in their footsteps; and in this spirit hinderances and discouragements, and even a keen sense of his own disqualifications, will but add zest to the struggle—*Labor ipse voluptas* will be the motto for a man like him.\*

The more we study the history of oratory the more shall we be convinced that natural facility of speech oftener results in mediocrity than in excellence. The greatest men in this as in every other art have been the men who have laboured most. The painter, the musician, the scholar, or the divine, all, in fact, who have attained to eminence in their particular spheres of life, know within themselves that they are distinguished from those with whom they first competed, not so much by superior genius as by greater energy and perseverance. It is true that, just as some persons of great wealth would fain have their fortune attributed to anything rather than their own exertions, so it may gratify a petty vanity in some men to conceal the steps by which they have risen. Unfortunately, this vanity is very general; we see it at work in our schools, our universities, and in public life; making success, if attributed to plodding industry, to be spoken of with a sneer, if to innate genius, to be regarded with unqualified

\* "I was not swaddled, and dandled, and rocked into a legislator; *nitor in adversum* is the motto for a man like me."—BURKE'S *Correspondence*.

admiration. Thus it happens that the world is misled, it accords to the few a monopoly of that which belongs to the many; while some of its brightest lights, though set upon a candlestick, had far more advantageously been placed beneath a bushel.

In one of his earlier contributions to the "*Edinburgh Review*," we find Lord Brougham expressing a very strong opinion as to the labour absolutely indispensable to make a good speaker. The quotation itself will be my best apology for giving it at length.

He says:—"A corrupt and careless eloquence so greatly abounds that there are but few public speakers who give any attention to their art, excepting those who debase it by the ornaments of most vicious taste. Not, indeed, that the two defects are often kept apart; for some men appear to bestow but little pains upon the preparation of the vilest composition that ever offended a classical ear, although it displays an endless variety of far-fetched thoughts, forced metaphors, unnatural expressions, and violent perversions of ordinary language. In a word, it is worthless, without the poor merit of being elaborate, and affords a new instance how wide a departure may be made from nature with very little care, and how apt easy writing is to prove bad reading.

"Among the sources of this corruption may clearly be distinguished, as the most fruitful, the habit of extempore speaking acquired rapidly by persons who frequent popular assemblies, and, beginning at the wrong end, attempt to speak before they have studied the art of oratory, or even duly stored their minds with the treasures of thought and of language, which can only be drawn from assiduous

intercourse with the ancient and modern classics. The truth is, that *a certain proficiency in public speaking may be attained, with nearly infallible certainty, by any person who chooses to give himself the trouble of frequently trying it, and can harden himself against the pain of frequent failure.* Complete self-possession and perfect fluency are thus acquired almost mechanically, and with no reference to the talents of him who becomes possessed of them. If he is a man of no capacity, his speeches will of course be very bad; but, though he be a man of genius, they will not be eloquent: a sensible remark, or a fine image, may frequently occur, but the loose, and slovenly, and poor diction, the want of art in combining and disposing his ideas, the inability to bring out many of his thoughts, and the utter incompetency to present any of them in the best and most efficient form, will deprive such a speaker of all claims to the character of an orator, and reduce him to the level of an ordinary talker. Perhaps the habit of speaking may have taught him something of arrangement, and a few of the simplest methods of producing an impression; but beyond these first steps he cannot possibly proceed by this empirical process, and his diction is sure to be much worse than if he had never made the attempt—clumsy, redundant, incorrect, unlimited in quantity, but of no value. Such a speaker is never in want of a word, and hardly ever has one that is worth having. ‘*Sine hâc quidem conscientiâ,*’ (says Quintilian, speaking of the habit of written composition,) ‘*illa ipsa extempore dicendi facultas, inanem modo loquacitatem dabit, et verba in labris nascentia.*’

“ It is a very common error to call this natural

eloquence ; it is the reverse, it is neither natural nor eloquence. A person under the influence of strong passions or feelings, and pouring forth all that fills his mind, produces a powerful effect upon his hearers, and frequently attains, without any art, the highest beauties of rhetoric. The language of the passions flows easily, but it is concise and simple, and the opposite of that wordiness which we have been describing. The untaught speaker, who is also unpractised, and utters according to the dictates of his feelings, now and then succeeds perfectly ; but in these instances he would not be the less successful for having studied the art, while that study would enable him to succeed equally in all that he delivers, and give him the same control over the feelings of others, whatever might be the state of his own. Herein, indeed, consists the value of the study : *it enables a man to do at all times what nature only teaches upon rare occasions.*"

That the same labour was recognized by the ancients as indispensable, both in the acquirement of oratorical power and for each particular exercise of it, is too generally known to need more than a passing notice. Plato,\* of whom it was said that " if the Father of the Gods had spoken in Greek, he would have used no other language than Plato's," continued this elaborate preparation up to his eightieth year, and a note-book was found after his death in which the opening words of the treatise " De Republicâ " were found written in several different arrangements, the words being, Κατέβην χθές εἰς Πειραιᾶ μετὰ Γλαυκῶνος τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος, " I went down yesterday to the Piræus with Glaucon the son of

\* Lord Brougham, " Edinburgh Review."

Ariston,"—a passage upon which a modern writer would probably think it affectation to bestow a second thought.

Whatever credit we may be inclined to give to the traditional story, which tells us the exact manner in which Demosthenes surmounted the peculiar difficulties with which he had to contend, we cannot doubt the fact of his having set himself, at a very early age and with determined energy, to overcome some great natural disqualifications for oratory. But for the well-known circumstances calling upon him imperatively to act in self-defence, it is probable that his defects would have prevented his making oratory a study in his early life, whilst in later years they would have become nearly insurmountable. For many years, in spite of his laborious preparation, he was by no means successful as a speaker, and found himself continually defeated by the most insignificant opponents. Failure, however, instead of daunting, roused him to greater exertion. He studied under all the great masters of oratory, continuing this study up to a much later period in life than we can well understand. Unlike most other great orators, he never seems to have acquired the power of impromptu speaking, and, except when under the influence of extreme passion, was supposed to be incapable of speaking on the spur of the moment.

By examining repetitions occurring in the several "Philippics," Lord Brougham has enabled us to understand the progressive workmanship of many of this orator's most striking passages. He shows how the variations and additions were not only suggested by these passages having to be adapted to

some new purpose, but were intended to make such passages in themselves more artistic, and to invest them with new beauty, by some happy expression or thought which had been suggested subsequently to their first delivery. We find also that even in narrative and in comparatively unimportant passages the same words are repeated in the same order, showing that great care had been once bestowed upon them, and that that order could not be improved upon.

In spite, however, of this elaborate preparation, there is no speaker or writer who has more uniformly put away all mere meretricious ornament. He would weigh well every word; but it was not only to see how it would ornament his own composition, but how it would act upon his hearers. He appealed to deeper feelings than mere admiration, and left his audience no time to think of anything but the subject in hand; according to the old story, instead of exclaiming, as he ceased, "What an orator!" they would call out, "Up! let us march against Philip."

To understand the secret of Demosthenes' power, we need only call to mind the effect produced, even upon a body of our cold phlegmatic countrymen, by a forcible allusion to some topic of the day, upon which the public mind has been much excited. He, however, was not content with thus firing any train which circumstances had prepared for him, but, with the most consummate skill, was perpetually preparing some new mine into which he might dart the fire of his eloquence, and overwhelm his opponent in the explosion which should ensue.

To the end of time, the name of Cicero will probably more than any other be associated with the



idea of oratorical excellence. Upon an author, however, whose peculiar excellencies and faults are on the tongue of every schoolboy it would be tedious to make any lengthened remarks.

His excess of ornament, his sacrifice of truth and the interest of his cause to effect, and his theatrical combinations arising from an excessive egotism, are faults which, if imitated in the present day, would probably negative the highest excellencies in other points. If there is one thing which an English audience instinctively abhors, it is the appearance of acting and straining after effect in a public speaker, and to be styled theatrical is the severest censure which can be passed upon him; whereas in ancient times the orator and the actor were regarded as almost identical. It is especially necessary, however, to be on one's guard against the faults of great men, because, owing to the false but highly reflected lustre which their excellencies throw over them, we may sometimes even be led to imitate that which would, if observed elsewhere, have called forth our loudest reprobation. We are all, in fact, too apt, like the Chinese workman, to imitate the *cracks* of that which we take for our pattern.

Mr. Pitt is of all others the example most often cited to prove how much may be effected by early training in oratory. His father, Lord Chatham, is said not only to have caused him continually to translate aloud the ancient classics into English, but to have been in the habit of making him declaim upon a given topic, about which he had previously given him full and accurate ideas. The powers thus acquired enabled him to bring at once to bear upon



any question all the varied resources with which nature and education had gifted him.

Owing to his being called upon unexpectedly, his maiden speech in Parliament was made entirely without preparation ; yet under these disadvantages it is described as having been pre-eminently successful. He confined himself to answering the former speakers, and, being well versed in the subject in hand, was enabled, by his previous training, to do that at the age of twenty-two which men of equal parts, but without that preparation, have never accomplished to the latest day of their lives. He, in fact, commenced his public career as a finished debater ; and the silence and attention which, when he first rose in the House of Commons, all were prepared to give to the memory of the father, were from that time forward commanded by the eloquence of the son. The greatest testimony of all to the unusually early development of his talents as a statesman is the important fact that he was prime minister of England at the age of twenty-four.

As an orator Mr. Pitt had few personal advantages, his countenance being described as repulsive, and his general appearance, though commanding, ungraceful, if not awkward. His manner of speaking conveyed the idea of his being haughty and overbearing, and his eloquence seemed always to command rather than to persuade. His style, though rarely enlivened by the flashes of genius which characterized his father's eloquence, or varied by the rich and bold imagery of Burke, seemed, nevertheless, as he spoke, to leave nothing to be required. His oratory has been thus described by Lord Brougham :—

“ He no sooner rose than he carried away every hearer, and kept the attention fixed and unflagging till it pleased him to let it go, and then—

‘ So charming left his voice, that we, awhile,  
Still thought him speaking, still stood fix’d to hear.’

This magical effect was produced by his unbroken flow, which never, for a moment, left the hearer in pain or doubt, and yet was not the mean fluency of mere relaxation, requiring no effort of the speaker, but imposing on the listener a heavy task; by his lucid arrangement, which made all parts of the most complicated subject quit their entanglement, and fall each into its place; by the clearness of his statements, which presented at once a picture to the mind; by the forcible appeals to strict reason and strong feeling, which formed the great staple of the discourse; by the majesty of the diction; by the depth and fulness of the most sonorous voice, and the unbending dignity of the manner, which ever reminded us that we were in the presence of more than an advocate or debater—that there stood before us a ruler of the people. Such were invariably the effects of this singular eloquence; and they were as certainly produced on ordinary occasions, as in those grander displays when he rose to the height of some great argument, or indulged in vehement invective against some individual, and variegated his speech with that sarcasm of which he was so great a master, and, indeed, so little sparing an employer; although, even here, all was uniform and consistent; nor did anything, in any mood of mind, ever drop from him that was unsuited to the majestic frame of the whole, or could disturb the serenity of the full and copious flood which rolled along.”

And yet there were some drawbacks to all this. The same writer goes on to say, that "when the first all-absorbing impressions of his eloquence had worn off, and opportunity was afforded for criticism, many faults and imperfections were disclosed. There prevailed a monotony in the matter as well as the manner, and even the delightful voice which so long prevented this from being felt was itself almost without any variety of tone. His composition was correct enough, but not peculiarly felicitous. His English was sufficiently pure without being at all racy, or various, or brilliant." Again he says, "The last effect of the highest eloquence was for the most part wanting; we seldom forgot the speaker, or lost the artist in the work. He was earnest enough; he seemed quite sincere. He was moved himself as he would move us; we even went along with him and forgot ourselves, but we hardly forgot him; and while thrilled with the glow which his burning words diffused, or transfixed with wonder at so marvellous a display of skill, we yet felt that it was the admiration of a consummate artist which filled us; and that, after all, we were present at an exhibition gazing upon a wonderful performer indeed, but still a performer."

Sheridan.—"I am sorry to say that I do not think this is in your line, you had much better have stuck to your former pursuits," was the opinion given by one well qualified to judge upon the powers and qualifications for oratory of Brinsley Sheridan. His curt rejoinder, expressed in language more strong than elegant, was characteristic of the man,—It was in him and it should come out.

Some defects he never was able to eradicate—a

thick and indistinct mode of delivery, and an inability to speak without preparation, characterized him to the end ; but by excessive labour he verified his own prediction, and, as an orator, eventually attained to excellence, rarely equalled, and, if we are to judge by the verdict of his contemporaries, never, with all its faults, surpassed. After his speech upon the Hastings' cause, an adjournment of the house was proposed, that the members might have time " to collect their scattered senses for the exercise of a sober judgment," they being then, to use the words of Mr. Pitt, " under the wand of the enchanter."

Burke said of it that it was " the most splendid effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united of which there was any record on tradition." Speaking of his second speech on this cause, he said that " no man of any description, as a literary character, could have come up in the one instance to the pure sentiments of morality, or on the other to the variety of knowledge, force of imagination, propriety and vivacity of allusion; beauty and elegance of diction, and strength of expression, to which they had then been listening. From poetry up to eloquence there was not a species of composition of which a complete and perfect specimen might not have been culled, from one part or other of the speech to which he alluded."

Lord Brougham has thus recorded the means by which he rose to such a height of excellence from so unpromising a beginning : — " What he wanted in acquired learning and natural quickness he made up by indefatigable industry ; within given limits, towards a present object, no labour could daunt him ; no man could work for a season with more steady and unwearied application. By constant practice in

small matters, or before private committees, by diligent attendance upon all debates, by habitual intercourse with all dealers in political wares, from the chiefs of parties and their more refined coteries, to the providers of daily discussion for the public, and the chroniclers of parliamentary speeches, he trained himself to a facility of speaking absolutely essential to all but first-rate genius, and all but necessary even to that; and he acquired what acquaintance with the science of politics he ever possessed, or his speeches ever betrayed. By these steps he rose to the rank of a first-rate speaker, and as great a debater as want of readiness and need for preparation would permit."

Mr. Sheridan's chief faults are those to which a lively imagination, unless under the control of a most correct taste, is sure to lead. "He delighted in gaudy figures, he was attracted by glare, and cared not whether the brilliancy came from tinsel or gold, from broken glass or pure diamond; he overlaid his thoughts with epigrammatic diction, he 'played to the galleries,' and indulged them, of course, with an endless succession of clap-traps. His worse passages by far were those which he evidently preferred himself—full of imagery, often far-fetched, oftener gorgeous and loaded with point that drew the attention of the hearer away from the thoughts to the words; and his best by far were those when he declaimed with his deep clear voice, though somewhat thick utterance, with a fierce defiance of some adversary, or an unappeasable vengeance against some oppressive acts, or reasoned rapidly in the like tone upon some plain matter of fact, or exposed as plainly to homely ridicule some puerile sophism."

His biographers have preserved several specimens of the excessive labour which Sheridan's speeches cost him; even his jokes are found to have passed through many editions on paper, and to have been subjected to long revision and condensation, before they were brought forth and carried all away by the irresistible mirth which their appositeness and apparently unpremeditated wit invariably excited. Before some of his greatest efforts he was in the habit of retiring into the country and giving himself up entirely to study. His speeches not only being excessively elaborated even in their minutest details, but, for the most part, committed accurately to memory.

We turn to a very different character.—Thomas Chalmers was born at Anstruther in the year 1780. As a boy he was remarkable for his extreme vivacity, idleness, and good nature,—characteristics which in early youth gave place to enthusiasm, perseverance, and general kindheartedness. At the age of nineteen he received his licence to preach from the college of St. Andrew's, where he had studied for some years previously; and at the age of thirty-five we find that his literary productions, as well as his extraordinary powers as a preacher, had brought him into considerable notice. His oratory has been thus described:—"His voice is neither strong nor melodious, his gestures neither graceful nor easy, but on the contrary extremely rude and awkward; his pronunciation is not only broadly national, but broadly provincial, distorting almost every word he utters into some barbarous novelty, which, had his hearers leisure to think of such things, might be productive of an effect at once ludicrous and offensive in a singular degree; but of a truth these are things which

no listener can attend to. This great preacher stands before him, armed with all the weapons of the most commanding eloquence, and swaying all around him with its imperial rule. At first, indeed, there is nothing to make one suspect what riches are in store; he commences in a low drawling key, which has not even the merit of being solemn, and advances from sentence to sentence, and from paragraph to paragraph, while you seek in vain to catch a single echo that gives promise of that which is to come. There is, on the contrary, an appearance of constraint about him that affects and distresses you. You are afraid that his chest is weak, and that even the slightest exertion he makes may be too much for it. But, then, with what tenfold richness does this dim preliminary curtain make the glories of his eloquence to shine forth, when the heated spirit at length shakes from it its chill confining fetters, and bursts out elate and rejoicing in the full splendour of its disimprisoned wings . . . . I have heard many men deliver sermons far better arranged in regard to argument, and have heard very many deliver sermons far more uniform in elegance, both of conception and of style; but most unquestionably I have never heard, either in England or Scotland, or in any other country, any preacher whose eloquence is capable of producing an effect so strong and irresistible as his.”\*

For power of presenting graphic and vivid pictures before the mind few would excel Dr. Chalmers. The conclusion of a sermon on Proverbs i. 29, warning his hearers of the folly of trusting to a death-bed

\* Peter's "Letters to his Kinsfolk," 2nd ed. vol. iii. p. 267. Quoted in Hanna's "Life of Chalmers."



repentance, both by its wonderful power, and by the effect which it produced, may be compared with the well-known passage of Massillon in which he anticipates the results of the final judgment of his hearers. One of his hearers, speaking of this sermon, writes thus :—" The power of his oratory and the force of his delivery were at times extraordinary ; at length, when near the close of his sermon, all on a sudden, his eloquence gathered triple force, and came down in one mighty whirlwind, sweeping all before it. Never can I forget my feelings at the time, neither can I describe them.

" It was a transcendently grand—a glorious burst. The energy of the Doctor's action corresponded ; intense emotion beamed from his countenance. I cannot describe the appearance of his face better than by saying, as Foster said of Hall's, it was ' lighted up almost into a glare.'

" The congregation, in so far as the spell under which I was allowed me to observe them, were intensely excited, leaning forward in the pews like a forest bending under the power of the hurricane, looking steadfastly at the preacher, and listening in breathless wonderment. One young man, apparently by his dress a sailor, who sat in a pew before me, started to his feet, and stood till it was over. So soon as it was concluded, there was (as invariably was the case at the close of the Doctor's bursts) a deep sigh, or rather gasp for breath, accompanied by a movement through the whole audience."

One great secret of Dr. Chalmers's success was that he held it to be a duty to bestow upon a composition to be used in God's service not less, but more labour than upon any ordinary literary pro-



duction. He showed but little sympathy with those preachers who, eschewing all ornaments of style, indulged in a laboured simplicity or offensive familiarity; and though at times he has himself been charged with going to the opposite extreme, and offending by his turgidity of expression, yet from the excellence of the motive it may well be regarded as a fault on the right side.\* We do not, indeed, question the sincerity of those who hold a different opinion, yet we cannot but regard the fact of their so doing as a very curious and contradictory phenomenon of religious experience, and one which we can no more account for than we can for the somewhat kindred inconsistency of those persons, who, while content themselves to dwell in houses of cedar, would begrudge the smallest expense incurred for the beautifying the house of God.

Lest the marvellous power to which some men have attained should seem to place them beyond our reach as examples, we must remember that we necessarily hear more of the successes than the failures of great orators; and many of those who at times have produced the profoundest impression have been on other occasions powerless even to keep the attention of an audience.

Burke, for instance, in spite of his rich imagination, commanding intellect, and matchless eloquence, spoke oftener to empty benches or slumbering hearers than any of his contemporaries. And we are told that on one occasion a member hurrying to the House, and finding it rapidly emptying, asked with

\* St. Augustine's remarks on the style of St. Cyprian would exactly apply to that of Dr. Chalmers, and may be read with advantage by all.—Conf. "De Doct. Christ." iv. 14.

the greatest *naïveté*, "Is the House broken up, or is Burke on his legs?" If such, therefore, has been the manner in which some of the greatest orators which the world ever knew have been appreciated, we conclude that, in spite of all their study, it would be the height of presumption in any, but especially in the young and inexperienced, to expect to obtain a uniformly attentive hearing.

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I must apologise to the reader for the fragmentary nature of the above chapter, and the length and frequency of the quotations; both faults are in a measure incidental to the subject. My original plan was to give a sketch of what Mr. Emerson would term "representative men" amongst the world's orators; but it proved impossible to do this adequately without departing too far from the main object of the present work, and making this part of it out of all proportion with the rest.\* As to the quotations, it seemed better to acknowledge their parentage than to "disfigure them, as gipsies do stolen children," in order to prevent their being recognized.

\* Lord Chatham and Mr. Canning are the two examples I most regret to be compelled, from want of room, to omit.

## CHAPTER XV.

“ ‘ And how did Garrick speak the soliloquy last night ? ’ ‘ Oh ! against all rule, my Lord ; most ungrammatically ! betwixt the substantive and the adjective, which should agree together in number, case, and gender, he made a breach thus—stopping as if the point wanted settling ; and betwixt the nominative case, which your Lordship knows should govern the verb, he suspended his voice in the epilogue a dozen times, three seconds and three fifths, by a stop-watch, my Lord, each time. Admirable grammarian ! ’ ‘ But in suspending his voice, was the sense suspended likewise ? did no expression of attitude or countenance fill up the chasm ? was the eye silent ? did you narrowly look ? ’ ‘ I looked only at the stop-watch, my Lord. ’ ‘ Excellent observer ! ’ ”

STERNE.



SOME years ago a man was being tried for stealing—what, for the sake of euphony, we will call a Jerusalem pony. The name of the counsel for the prosecution was “Missing ;” the defendant’s counsel finding matters going against him, after making an elaborate appeal to the jury, wound up somewhat in the following manner :—“ I think, therefore, gentlemen of the jury, you will all readily agree with me that the only fact which has been proved for the prosecution is one which we never for a moment ventured to doubt, namely, that in this case ‘ *the ass is missing.* ’ ”

Now the whole force of the joke evidently de-

depends upon the manner in which the last four words are uttered. To give them expression they are naturally divided into subject and predicate, and the voice suspended, though, from the shortness of the sentence, almost imperceptibly, after the first clause : thus, “ the ass’ is missing ;” but pronounce them without this suspension, and, the whole stress coming upon the word missing, the joke would seem at best to be but an accidental one. This, I think, is one of the first principles of reading, to distinguish intuitively where the main division of a sentence occurs, and to let the chief suspension of the voice occur there. “ The ass which has given us so much trouble in this case’ is missing”—the main suspension here occurring after the word *case*, and the words preceding that being pronounced in a running continuous tone ; so that we may go on and lengthen the subject or predicate indefinitely, and yet the same principle must regulate the reading of the whole.

The fault we are all apt to commit in reading is to ignore the suspensions of the voice natural in speaking, and attend only to the grammatical pauses. (By a suspension of the voice I mean any one of those various tones, all indicating incompleteness, into which a person will find himself surprised on coming unexpectedly to the conclusion of a sentence. By a pause I mean the conclusive tones of voice naturally adopted when the sense is more or less complete.) Thus :—

“ ’Tis sorrow” builds the shining ladder up,  
Whose golden rounds” are our calamities.”

You cannot injure the sense here however long the voice is suspended at the words “ sorrow ” and

“ rounds,” because the sense is manifestly incomplete, and is shown to be so by the tone of voice ; but neglect this suspension altogether, and the lines go for nothing ; they are badly read, and the mind cannot without an effort catch their full meaning.

Whereas, then, the first principle of accurate *punctuation* is, that the subject and predicate should not be separated by a grammatical pause ; the first principle of good reading is, that they should be separated by a marked suspension of the voice. So much value may we attach to punctuation as a guide to the reader !

It is not, however, only at the chief grammatical divisions of a sentence, but necessarily at every few words, that the suspension takes place ; and the art of reading greatly depends upon the discrimination with which it is used, and the variety of tone with which, according to the context, it is accompanied. *Each subordinate member of a sentence is as distinct from that which follows or precedes it as are the separate syllables of a word.* The duration of the suspension which marks this distinctness must be regulated by the length of the sentence, the nature of the subject, and the convenience of the reader. *The few words making up such minor divisions* will be pronounced as closely as possible together ; the final letters often running into the following words, like the final *s* into the initial vowel in French. By this means the mind of the hearer catches the meaning of what is read without effort, and, instead of being confused with a mass of *words*, *ideas* are at once conveyed to him. A single sentence, particularly one of any length, read without attention to these rules, has much the same effect as a whole

paragraph read without any pause to mark the end of the sentences.

The suspension of the voice is often so slight that it might be more accurately defined as simply a '*solution of continuity*;' this is especially the case when the grammatical and logical parts of speech are not identical. *E. g.*

"How-many-thousand of-my-poorest-subjects'  
Are at-this-hour asleep."

"How many thousand" is here the grammatical, and "how many thousand of my poorest subjects" the logical subject. So "are asleep" is the grammatical, "are at this hour asleep" the logical predicate. Where, however, the words, as in the last five of the above passage, all combine to convey one idea, and are so few as to be easily pronouncible together, they would still be closely connected.

At other times the grammatical divisions of a sentence must be subordinated to the suspensive pause. *E. g.*

"Thou art a guard too wanton for the head,  
Which princes flush'd with conquest seek to hit."

The main suspension here occurs after the word "wanton," the words "the head, which princes flushed with conquest seek to hit" being logically but one idea; and we might mark it thus:—

"Thou-art-a-guard too-wanton" for the head',  
Which princes-flush'd-with-conquest seek-to-hit."

Archbishop Whateley, in his criticism upon the system of punctuation adopted by Mr. Sheridan, objects to a mark of suspension being placed after the word "land" in the Fifth Commandment; urging

that it should be placed only after the word "*long*." Whereas it would seem to be required in both places, the words being too many to be pronounced in any other way without undue effort. Archbishop Whately urges, in support of his objection, that "a person using such an expression as 'I hope you will find enjoyment in the garden which you have planted,' would not separate the words 'garden' and 'which.'"  
Even allowing the truth of this supposition, which I cannot, the mere fact of the extension of the grammatical noun being longer in one instance than the other prevents the analogy holding good; the suspension in no case affecting the sense, and being used or omitted at the discretion and convenience of the reader; besides which, the extensive relative clause is much more a subordinate idea in the example here quoted, and, admitting a quick colloquial style, would not require the suspension to enforce it.

Mr. Sheridan's fault seems to have been that he never understood the grammatical principles\* upon which his own system was really based; and though a correct ear and taste prevented his falling into error himself, yet he failed, probably from this reason, in making his system of any material service to those not equally gifted.

An error into which many writers on this subject would seem to lead their readers is, that every suspension of the voice will be accompanied with the same tone, whereas the tones are so infinitely varied, according to the meaning and the context, that it would be next to an impossibility to indicate them

\* See end of present Chapter.



by anything short of a most elaborate system of musical notation ; nor do we think that this would succeed, even if composed with the greatest skill, and aided by the most practised ear, on the part of the learner. If, for instance, we consider the effect of one of the most magnificent of Handel's recitatives compared with one of Shakespeare's speeches, we see at once that nature has a voice and notation of her own, which the skill of all the musicians in the world will in vain attempt to rival.

We dismiss, therefore, entirely the idea of learning to read by the assistance of any signs, excepting those which may be used to supplement the ordinary system of punctuation.

The suspension of the voice of which we have been treating will be found to add as much to the comfort of the reader as to the pleasure and gratification of the hearers. Not only will it give him time continually to take breath, and so enable him to convey, without effort, the full meaning of the longest and most involved sentences, but it will of itself, in a great measure, do away with anything like monotony ; as the more entirely the organs of speech sink into a quiescent state, the more perceptible will be the difference of intonation on their being called again into action. Again, the suspensive pauses will enable a reader to call attention to particular words much more forcibly, and yet more naturally, than by the use of strong emphasis. Take, for instance, Henry's address to his son.

“ See, sons, what things ye are,  
How quickly nature falls into revolt  
When gold becomes her object.



*For this''* the foolish over careful fathers  
 Have broke their sleep with thoughts, their brains with care,  
 Their bones with industry;  
*For this''* they have engross'd and pil'd up  
 The canker'd heaps of strange achieved gold;  
*For this''* they have been thoughtful to invest  
 Their sons with arts and martial exercises.  
 When'' like the bee'' culling from every flower,  
 The virtuous sweets;  
 Our thighs' pack'd with wax, our mouths with honey,  
 We bring it to the hive, and like the bees''  
 Are murder'd for our pains."

The allusive and cumulative force of the passage is entirely lost if it is read, "For this the foolish, &c." without any suspension.

This rule holds good especially in the case of strong antithesis, double meaning, or satire. *E. g.*

"You have done good," my lord, by stealth"  
 The rest' is upon record."

If read without this suspension the sense is very apt to be lost, unless time should be given for the hearer to recall and reconsider the words. So, also, when a great deal is intended to be conveyed in a very few words—as in epigram, or simile. *E. g.*

"A single doctor' like a sculler" plies,  
 The patient lingers, and but slowly dies;  
 But two physicians" like a pair of oars"  
 Will waft him quickly to the Stygian shores."

One other use of the suspensive pause is too important to be passed over—its use, I mean, in marking the metre in reading poetry. Some persons make poetry a mere jingle, others read it like painfully inflated prose; the difference between the two methods consisting very much in the manner in which

the reader passes from line to line. The first class of readers gives the metre without the sense; the second, the sense without the metre;—as usual, the true method lies midway between these extremes. The metre *must never be ignored* however closely the last word of a line may be connected by sense and grammar with the first of the succeeding one; there must always be a slight, though easy and natural, suspension of the voice, which, while it does not interrupt the sense, will be found to bring out the beauty and smoothness of the versification, and often the meaning of the poet. No one can read Pope or Milton for many minutes without perceiving that they often go out of their way to place a word at the end of a line, calculating on the force which this suspension, lengthened on such occasions by a good reader, will necessarily give it.

A thorough appreciation of the meaning, and often the grammar of a sentence, as well as some little practice, will obviously be required before a person gains the habit of *separating and grouping* his words correctly. Several amusing instances are recorded of the various readings which have at times been popularly received, owing to absurd errors in this respect. For instance, Macbeth is made to say :—

“ Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No—these my hands will rather  
The multitudinous sea incarnadine,  
Making the green one” red.”

Ludicrously personifying the sea, and calling it a “green one.” Whereas by reading it thus, “making the green” one red,” the full power and beauty of the thought is seen at once.

Another passage Mr. Sheridan quotes in his  
“*Art of Reading* :”—

“*West of the town*” a mile among the rocks”  
Two hours ere noon to-morrow I expect thee,  
Thy single arm to mine.”

Read thus, the absurd idea is conveyed that they have to scramble for a mile over rocks, situated at the west of the town, instead of the place of rendezvous being some particular rocks “*west of the town a mile.*”

If there is one fault in a child to which one might be disposed to be very lenient, it would be that of not minding his stops. It often seems as if nature in the youthful pupil was struggling against the artificial system which it was being forced into; the child regarding its tormentor much as the Chinese infant probably does the mother who bandages up its feet to prevent them growing to unfashionable proportions. Unfortunately, most of us in early youth have learnt too well to “*mind our stops,*” and it is as difficult to get out of the habit as for the aforesaid Chinese to regain the natural shape of the foot.

Enough, however, has already been said to show that the system of punctuation is not only a very uncertain and insufficient guide to the reader, but was manifestly never intended to do anything more than to point out the grammatical construction, the writer in early times never anticipating that his composition would be read aloud. To get rid of the habit of a servile adherence to the ordinary stops engendered by early habits, the simplest method is to copy out passages and punctuate them for reading,

marking the relative duration of the pauses by some such signs as would undoubtedly have been used had punctuation ever been intended to serve as a guide for reading. A habit will thus be gradually formed; and after a time a person will, without the least effort or thought about the matter, read whatever is set before him in an easy and natural tone.

One point must be clearly understood—that the person who makes a proper use of these suspensions of the voice can never be confounded with the slow drawling reader, even should he occupy the same, or a longer time in reading a passage. His reading, however slow, will be sharp, clear, and decisive; the pauses serving to group and throw out the various members of his sentences, just as light and shade do the figures in a picture. Whereas the drawler will, on the contrary, confuse the ear as much as the unskilful dauber does the eye.

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The following abstract of a portion of Morell's English Grammar (pp. 66—95) will enable the reader to understand the principles upon which many of the above remarks have been founded.

“ A sentence is a complete thought expressed in words.

“ When we express a thought the thing which has occupied the mind is called *the subject*; that which we have thought, and can affirm respecting it, is called *the predicate*; as, Fire burns.

“ Both the subject and predicate may be enlarged, as in the following example :—

	<i>Sub.</i>	<i>Pred.</i>
Elementary form,	Men	think.
Enlarged form,	<i>Wise</i> Men	think <i>rightly</i> .

“ The noun in the structure of sentences can be expanded into infinite and participial phrases : as, Anger is madness ; To be angry is to be mad ; or, Being angry is being mad.

“ So the adjective and adverb may be expanded into phrases.

“ The noun, the adjective, and adverb, may sometimes be expanded into subordinate sentences ; as,

- |                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Anger                     | } is madness. |
| 2. To be angry               |               |
| 3. That a man shall be angry |               |

“ When one or more attributes are added to the simple subject it is said to be *enlarged* ; as, *The beneficent wisdom of the Almighty* is visible everywhere.

“ When the verb does not suffice to convey an entire notion of the action which we affirm of the subject, it requires to be *completed* ; as, William defeated. Here the idea is incomplete until we specify whom he defeated—namely, Harold. The word Harold is, therefore, called the *completion* of the predicate.

“ The word or words which form the completion of the predicate are usually termed the *object*. The predicate of a sentence, in addition to being completed, may also be *extended* by words which express any circumstance of time, place, manner, &c. ; as, The eagle flies *with great swiftness*.

“ But any of the above subordinate parts may have words and phrases still further dependent on them ; and those words and phrases may in their turn govern others ; so that, taking the subject and predicate as the *bases*, we may have various parts of a sentence at one, two, three, and even four, or more removes from the primary elements, there being still only one subject and one affirmation in the whole.

#### “ EXAMPLE.

“ Decius, tired of writing books adapted to the learned only, chose a popular question, with many points of practical interest in it, for the purpose of bringing into useful exercise all the depth and clearness of thought accruing from habits of mind long cherished by philosophical studies.

	1st remove.	2nd remove.	3rd remove.	4th remove.	
Decius	tired	of writing books	adapted	to the learn- ed only,	} belonging to subject.
Chose	a popular question,	with many points of practical in- terest in it,			} belonging to object.
	for the purpose of bringing into useful exercise	all the depths and clearness of thought	accruing from ha- bits of mind	long cher- ished by philoso- phical studies.	} belonging to extensions.

‘ Him the Almighty power  
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,  
With hideous ruin and combustion, down  
To bottomless perdition.’

#### *General Analysis.*

Sub. with Attrib.	Pred.	Obj. with Attrib.	Extensions of Pred.
The Almighty power	hurled	him headlong flam- ing from the ethe- real sky,	with hideous ruin and combustion, down to bottomless perdition.

#### *Analysis of Complete Sentence.*

“ A reader unacquainted with the real nature of a classical education will probably undervalue it, when he sees that so large a portion of time is devoted to the study of a few ancient authors, whose works seem to have no direct bearing on the studies and duties of our own generation.

- a. A reader unacquainted with the real nature  
of a classical education will probably under-  
value it . . . . . } Principal  
sentence  
to b.
- b. When he sees . . . . . } Adv. sen-  
tence to a.
- c. That so large a portion of time is devoted to  
the study of a few ancient authors . . . } Noun sen-  
tence to b.

d. Whose works seem to have no direct bearing on the studies and duties of our own generation . . . . . } Adv. sentence to c.


“ The former scheme of analysis will then be applicable to the subordinate sentences.”

By thus understanding the principle of breaking up a sentence into its component parts, the youngest reader will perceive, at once, both when he may advantageously suspend his voice, and what words he must endeavour as closely as possible to connect together.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“Awake the feelings and inform the sense, this is the true way to get effective reading. ‘Every man of genius,’ says Johnson, ‘has some way of fixing the attention peculiar to himself, and, with some few exceptions, every man of intelligence will by his natural manner gain the sympathy of an intelligent audience, who are seldom smitten with the love of what is called *fine* reading.’”

BOYES' *Life and Books*.

N chronicling the details of a “marriage in high life” the morning papers lately remarked, in what were intended to be highly complimentary terms, upon the manner in which the officiating clergyman had performed the ceremony; an unguarded expression caught the keen eye of that *censor morum* of the nineteenth century, Mr. Punch. How he proceeded to criticise the offending paragraph I cannot exactly remember, but the burden of his remarks was, that to speak of a man as reading *emphatically* was as bad a compliment as it was possible to pay him, if not a positive insult. Even the oracular Mr. Punch probably never uttered a truer sentiment; emphasis, as it is often understood and applied, being not only out of place in ordinary reading, but often positively offensive.

In ordinary conversation a person scarcely ever



uses emphasis, save when he is more or less excited—much more excited, at any rate, than he should ever be in general reading. Now reading, though essentially different from speaking, (it being an art of itself to write that which shall resemble conversation,) is so strictly analogous to it, that the same fundamental principles will be found to exist in both, regulating at once the manner, and the tone, and the expression with which our words are uttered; and for this reason I think we can only decide what emphasis does mean by reference to our familiar everyday conversation. Listen for five minutes to any two persons conversing together; the first thing we observe is that there are invariably one or more words in every sentence in which the whole meaning centres. We then observe that these words are not marked by any emphatic pronunciation, but are brought out by the *words preceding and following them being more or less subordinated to them*. Just as in music the *fortes* are marked by the *pianos* in the previous and subsequent passages, rather than by actual strength of voice or wrists in the execution of the passage itself. Those persons who can appreciate the difference between the two styles of singing and playing will understand the difference between a reader who marks the most prominent words by emphasis and one who leaves the hearer's own judgment to infer which they are by subordinating the rest of the sentence. Take two or three instances of this:—

Do you mind dining *early* to-day?

He said there was a *beggar* at the door.

We observe, again, that a very slight difference of

tone will make the same words convey a totally different meaning, and still without the use of anything approaching to what is ordinarily termed emphasis. *E. g.*

“ Is old *Dibble* dead ? ” ( I thought it was the parson not the sexton. )

“ Is *old* Dibble dead ? ” ( I thought it was the young one. )

“ *Is* old Dibble dead ? ” ( I think you’re joking. )

“ Is old Dibble *dead* ? ” ( I fancied he was as well as ever. )

At other times a change of tone modifies the meaning. *E. g.*

He said the carriage was *at the door*.

Implying that it was expected. Or,

He said the *carriage* was at the door.

Implying that it was not expected.

The fault of many readers is that they pass over words which are meant to convey a distinct idea as though they would imply that the idea had already been expressed, pronouncing them in a tone which in conversation means, “ But you know all about that.” Thus in most persons’ reading there is nothing graphic, and a description of an event, or scene, or dialogue, is scarcely ever realized as it would be if related by the same person in actual conversation. This fault too will often be found to be the cause of the monotony generally inseparable in readers. To avoid this is to practise reading passages as to persons who showed some difficulty in understanding their meaning. Variety of tone will inevitably attend such an attempt. It is not bad practice to read passages of Latin to those but slightly acquainted with the language, and try to make the intonation convey the sense.

A person who in reading will make the sense of his author plain by so simple a process as the above suggestion involves will not, indeed, be called a "*fine reader*" by the multitude; but the very fact of his conveying the full meaning without drawing any of the attention to himself will be sufficient to secure him the approbation of that *one judicious one* whose approval should "in our allowance overweigh a whole theatre of others."

Words closely connected in sense will often be found more or less separated from each other, and care will have to be taken by the reader that he makes the connection evident by his tone of voice.

*E. g.*

" He stood and called  
His legions, Angel forms, who lay entranced  
*Thick* as autumnal leaves, that strow the brooks  
In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades  
High overarched, embower; or *scattered sedge*  
*Afloat*, when," &c.

At times several sentences will be found to be exegetical of a single word or expression, and, unless this is made evident by a sort of continuous and subordinate tone, their meaning will often be lost, or caught with difficulty. *E. g.*

" Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast  
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains  
In cradle of the rude imperious surge;  
And in the visitation of the *winds*,  
*Who take the ruffian billows by the top,*  
*Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them,*  
*With deafening clamour in the slippery clouds,*  
*That with the hurly death itself awakes?*"

Unless some care is taken in reading the construction would seem to be about to recommence with

the words, "And in the visitation of the winds," and its connection with the words "rock his brains" would be completely lost, depriving the whole latter part of the sentence of its beauty and effect.

One error the reader should especially guard against—that of giving undue prominence to small words, and of pronouncing them as they are spelt, instead of according to the conventional manner of using them. "My," and all other pronominal forms, would always, except for the sake of emphasis, be pronounced short, as in conversation. So with numberless other small words, especially the different parts of the auxiliary verb "to be." These small words are seldom sufficiently subordinated in reading to the main idea which they are intended to supplement.

I would here remark the great difference an appreciation of these and such principles will make in the reading of the Scriptures, more particularly the narrative portions. I remember being very much struck with this on hearing the twelfth chapter of Acts read. Take the seventh verse: "And, behold, the *angel of the Lord* came upon him, and a *light* shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly." By subordinating all the words in the first clause to the prominent idea, "the angel of the Lord," the narrative is brought out graphically, and the fact of the angel's appearance is realized to the hearer's mind; but if read in the ordinary matter-of-course style much of this is lost, and it is rather implied that it was an event expected than otherwise. Again, the fact of a *light* shining in the prison is brought out as something to be remarked upon, and

as showing the nature of the visitation. So, again, in the words "he *smote* Peter upon the *side* and *raised him up*." So the fourteenth verse: the damsel "ran in, and told how *Peter* stood without;" the force of the narrative turning, not upon the fact of any one standing without, that being already known by the knocking, but upon the fact of its being *Peter*, whom they thought to be in prison. Or, take again the beautiful description of Mary meeting the risen Saviour at the sepulchre: "She turned herself back, and saw *Jesus* standing." All being here subordinate to the fact that, in spite of His being crucified, it was actually *Jesus* who was standing near her. And again, "She supposing Him to be the *gardener*;" the force of the narrative can only be brought out by the simple tone of voice in which a mistaken supposition would be generally related, slightly subordinating the rest of the expression to the one important word.

Nor do I think it would be very difficult to show that these principles of reading have sometimes a greater importance than merely bringing out the force of the narrative—they may even at times throw light upon the mistaken meaning of passages. In illustration of this I would remark, by way of suggestion, upon one passage which has been the subject of more controversy than almost any other portion of Scripture, and the true meaning of which has never yet been explained in a manner which does not involve some amount of contradiction. The passage I mean is this: "Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled." Our Saviour, pointing to the temple, had prophesied its total destruction. His disciples said:

“ Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” The Saviour at once points out the mistake of His disciples in confounding the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming; and then throughout His answer He dwells alternately upon the two events, again and again referring to the “ *these things*” as distinct from His coming, and from the end of the world, the exact time of which He says no man knoweth; and He concludes all by saying, “ *This generation* shall not pass away till THESE THINGS be fulfilled;” implying, as it would seem, that this and many more generations should pass away before His second coming, or, as He had before expressed it, “ but the end shall not be yet;” He having just said that the time of the events which they considered to be identical with the destruction of Jerusalem was not yet revealed.

The expectation of the early Church was still that Christ’s Second Advent would be in that generation: *e. g.* “ We which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord.” We have, therefore, strong presumptive evidence that for some wise purpose the full meaning of our Saviour’s words were not fully entered into by the disciples themselves; and, as if in confirmation of this, St. Luke, writing only from report, gives our Saviour’s words as though undoubtedly they referred only to the destruction of Jerusalem, and that His Second Advent really was to take place at that time.

It would be manifestly out of place here to support this supposition by the arguments which might be adduced; but, however this particular passage may be viewed, enough has been said to show the

importance of the principle here advocated, and the absolute necessity of studying the meaning of Scripture in order to read it correctly.

Professor Blunt, in his "Duties of the Parish Priest," writes thus on this subject: "No rule for reading God's word can help a man so effectually as the rule of thoroughly *understanding* what he reads; while the mere regulation of his voice will be an actual commentary, conveying to his hearers the true meaning, when it might otherwise escape them, and often giving a novelty to lessons which they had listened to a hundred times before. For how does the argument of the Epistles of St. Paul, for instance, suffer in the hands of a reader who has not studied them! How intelligible, even where it is subtle, does it often become by the mere cadence and articulation of a proficient! Nay, to take a simpler instance, let a reader of the following passage of St. Luke enter himself into its force, and his emphasis will convey the effect of it to his audience too—let him be unaware of its import, (a case I have witnessed,) and how does he confound it in the recital: 'But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in *Israel* in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of *Sidon*, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in *Israel*, in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the *Syrian*.'"

Passing again to the consideration of ordinary reading, I would remark upon the necessity, not only of entering fully into the meaning of an author,



but also into the feeling which underlies the formal expression of his sentiments. This will, of course, depend so much upon the good taste of the reader, and his appreciation of his author, that very little can be said upon the subject. There should be simplicity in narrative, vivacity in dialogue, earnestness in argument, and feeling in rendering the language of passion or emotion; all must be rendered in a manner as closely analogous as possible to that of speaking, yet without affectation or exaggeration.

To illustrate some of the foregoing suggestions, I have selected a few lines of Longfellow's "Evangeline;" partly because it is written in a style which approaches unusually near to that of ordinary speaking, and partly because the metre in which it is written is so utterly alien to the genius of the English language; that, if not read with tolerable correctness, it will at once offend the least fastidious ear.\*

"In-the-Acadian-land' on-the-shores-of-the-*Basin-of-Minas'*  
Distant' secluded' still' the-little-village-of-*Grandpré'*  
Lay-in-the-fruitful-valley.  
Somewhat-*apart*-from-the-village' and-nearer-the-*Basin-of-*  
*Minas'*  
*Benedict Bellefontaine'* the wealthiest-farmer-of-*Grandpré'*  
Dwelt on-his-goodly-acres" and-*with-him'* directing-his-  
household'

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\* This assertion is founded on the fact of the great preponderance of monosyllables in the purest forms of the English language. Shakespeare again and again affords such instances as the following:—

"Good friend, thou hast no cause to say so yet,  
But thou shalt have, and creep time ne'er so slow,  
Yet it shall come for me to do thee good.  
I had a thing to say, but let it go,  
The sun is in the heaven, and the proud day," &c.

where we have fifty monosyllables consecutively. So in Mil-



*Gentle-Evangeline* lived, his-child' and-the-pride-of-the-village.  
 Fair was-she to-behold' that maiden of seventeen summers.  
 'Sunshine of St. Eulalie' was she called; for that was the  
 sunshine'  
 Which' as the farmers believed' would load their *orchards* with  
*apples*;  
 She-too would-bring-to-her-husband's-house' delight-and-  
 abundance'  
 Filling-it-full-of-love' and the ruddy-faces-of-children."

"Once in-an-ancient-city' whose-name I-no-longer-remember'  
 Raised-aloft-on-a-column' a-brazen-statue-of-Justice'  
 Stood in-the-public-square' upholding-the-scales in its-left-hand'  
 And-in-its-right a-sword, as-an-emblem" that justice' presided'  
 Over-the-laws-of-the-land, and the hearts-and-homes-of-the-  
 people.  
 Even the *birds*' had built their nests' in the scales-of-the-ba-  
 lance'  
 Having no fear' of the sword-that-flashed-in-the-sunshine-above.  
 Might' took the place of right' and-the-weak were-oppressed'  
 and-the-mighty'  
 Ruled with-an-iron-rod. Then it chanced in a nobleman's  
 palace'  
 That a necklace of pearls' was lost' and ere long' a suspicion'  
 Fell on-an-orphan-girl' who lived as maid in the household.  
 She, after-form-of-trial condemned-to-die-on-the-scaffold'  
 Patiently met her doom" at the foot-of-the statue of Justice.  
 As-to-her-Father-in-Heaven' her innocent spirit ascended,'  
 Lo! o'er the city' a tempest rose" and the bolts-of-the-thunder'  
 Smote the-statue-of-bronze' and hurled-in-wrath from-its-left  
 hand'  
 Down-on-the-pavement below' the-clattering-scales-of-the-ba-  
 lance'  
 And-in-the-hollow-thereof' was found the-nest-of-a-magpie'  
 Into whose clay-built walls' the-necklace-of-pearls was-in-  
 woven."

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ton, Spenser, and other old writers. The effect of this strikes us at once on reading the English Hexameter; we find there some eighty per cent. of the lines having two or more monosyllables within the two last feet; whereas, in Virgil or Homer we should scarcely find half-a-dozen such instances in a whole book. Thus the rare exception of the Classical is made to be the standing rule of the English Hexameter.

Without hazarding any further suggestions on this subject, we only remark that in reading for the benefit of others all thoughts of rules must be put on one side. Habit formed by previous study must have become a second nature, and all must, in this sense of the word, be "*natural*;" above all, there must never be the desire to display an acquired power, but simply to set forth the meaning of an author. Just as in ordinary life forgetfulness of self is the highest ornament of good manners, and as it is so often the distinguishing mark between the mere man of birth or fashion and a gentleman, properly so called, so will that reader alone attain to the highest perfection, who, forgetting himself, keeps the one object in view of pleasing or instructing his hearers.

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Since writing the above, a friend, whose unusually pleasant manner of reading had made me curious to know how he had acquired the power, told me the advice which he had once received from a remarkably good public reader. It was to the effect that he should take a short passage of any author, and read it with every possible variety of emphasis and intonation, not keeping to the real meaning of the words, but trying to draw out every shade of meaning which they could possibly be made to express. The following lines will present a fair scope for any one who may wish to try the experiment. If it should do no more than impress the moral of the strain, it may not be quite useless :—

## THE “ ’TIS BUTS.”

YOU ask me the secret by which we contrive  
On an income so slender so fairly to thrive :  
Why, the long and the short of the matter is this,—  
We take things as they come, so nought comes amiss.  
Our sons are no sluggards, our daughters no sluts ;  
And we still keep an eye to the main and “ ’Tis Buts.”

Neighbour Squander’s great treat, *’tis but* so much, he says ;  
And his wife’s fine new gown, *’tis but* so much, she says.  
*’Tis but* so much the fair, *’tis but* so much the play,  
His child’s gew-gaw, too, *’tis but* that thrown away :  
But each *’tis but* grows on till they run on so fast,  
That he finds *’tis but* coming to want at the last.

Now something occurs, and he says, like a ninny,  
I’ll buy it at once,—it is but a guinea :  
And then something else, and he still is more willing ;  
For it is but a trifle,—it is but a shilling :  
Then it is but a penny,—it is but a mite,—  
Till the *’tis buts* at last sum up ruin outright.

Contentment’s the object at which we should aim ;  
It is riches, and power, and honour, and fame :  
For wants and our comforts in truth are but few,  
And we seldom buy that without which we can do.  
This maxim of maxims most others outcuts :  
If you’d thrive keep an eye to the main and “ *’tis buts.*”

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ To train the foliage o’er the snowy lawn ;  
To guide the pencil, turn the tuneful page ;  
To give society its highest taste ;  
Well order’d home man’s best delight to make ;  
And by submissive wisdom, modest skill,  
With every gentle care-eluding art,  
To raise the virtues, animate the bliss,  
And sweeten all the toils of human life ;  
This be the female dignity and praise.”—THOMSON.



NATURE does not consist in the observance of rules, but rules may be deduced from the examination of nature. *The perfection, therefore, of art is in nowise incompatible with the strictest adherence to nature.*

Now an art is not learned in a day, nor in a few hours ; its first principles may be mastered, and errors connected with it may be pointed out by one already skilled in it, but the application of the principles must be a work of time and study. One great fault of the modern system of teaching elocution seems to be that the learners are led to suppose that hours will undo the work of years ; the consequence is that they simply learn to clothe their speech in a sort of motley harlequin garb, offensive from its very pretension to finery ; it is neither old nor new, but genuine patchwork.

Since, however, experience tells us that the more many men strive, by themselves, to attain to a natural mode of reading the more glaringly absurd and painfully ludicrous does their imitative style often become, the practical question arises, Where is a man to seek the requisite assistance? Under the existing state of things, if he feels his own deficiencies, and seeks for the requisite aid, the chances are greatly in favour of his falling into the hands of a mere charlatan; and, as quack remedies are proverbially dangerous, he will be fortunate if his former defects are not made more glaring, and perhaps finally incurable. Until this matter is taken up by the Universities, upon whom the education of all classes directly or indirectly depends, very little can be done. We hazard one suggestion in the interim, which will perhaps prove more practical than it may at first sight appear; namely, that some one *well qualified, if not to instruct, at least to criticise, may be found by almost every family fire-side*. It is a fact which experience will I think bear out, that amongst educated Englishwomen it is as rare to find a really bad reader as a really good one amongst the same class of men. One of the few good readers I have known told me he owed what power he possessed in that way to his WIFE; not that she herself had any remarkable skill in the art, but, having good taste and a critical ear, she could tell when a passage was read well and naturally, and he, on the other hand, had perseverance enough to study a sentence, and read it again and again, until he satisfied his fair critic.

It was with a perfect appreciation of a woman's more refined taste and power at least of criticism

that Sir Walter Scott ascribes to the pen of a girl of eighteen (Julia Mannering) the following inimitable description of a good reader:—

“ In the evening papa often reads, and I assure you he is the best reader of poetry you ever heard ; not like that actor who made a kind of jumble between reading and acting, staring and bending his brow, and twisting his face, and gesticulating as if he were on the stage and dressed out in all his costume. My father’s manner is quite different—it is the reading of a gentleman who produces effect by feeling, taste, and inflection of voice, not by action or mummary.”

We do not, of course, understand this to be applicable to *public* reading, though in this case we cannot but repeat what Addison has said of a speaker, that he ought “ either to lay aside all kinds of gesture, or at least to make use of such only as is graceful and expressive.” At any rate, if a man has the least respect, not only for himself but for his hearers, he will avoid the sort of barn-door theatrical style which Sir Walter’s fair heroine so justly criticises, and will take care that his whole gesture and manner does not transgress the bounds of that modest assurance which commands as much by its own self-respect as it pleases by its manifest deference to others.


I am not supposing that many of those who may read these pages will have secured the *domus et placens uxor* sufficiently early in life to do as the more fortunate individual whose case I quoted above ; but I think that every one who will put aside the foolish idea that good reading is a mere childish accomplishment may readily, within the circle of his

own family, secure “half-hours with an approved critic,” and may thus, in the course of a few weeks or months, do much towards making himself a really good reader; I say *making himself*, because we shall find that even persons of the most accurate taste can seldom explain exactly why a particular passage is read wrongly, and where and what the fault is. It will often be according to the tenor of the old story:—

“I do not love you, Dr. Fell,  
*The reason why* I cannot tell.”

“*The reason why*” a man must do his best to find out for himself. May he not only succeed in this, but discover the remedy and reverse the judgment!

*On certain Physiological Points connected with  
Speech. By Dr. Stone.*

Y far the greater number of the functions necessary to our life, and indispensable as means of intercourse with our fellow-creatures, are the result of practice and gradual acquirement. It is somewhat remarkable that in the looseness of everyday thought they should be regarded as instinctive and intuitive. And yet it needs only a moment's recollection to show that walking, eating, and many similar uses of the body, are almost as much results of teaching as spelling and arithmetic. It is true they are founded on instinctive predispositions ; but instinct, which directs the whole life of the lowest animals, and a considerable portion even of the highest, seems in the human species to have a short predominance. By the end of the first year of infancy its power is on the wane ; and though perhaps some influence lingers here and there in the mind, and can be detected later in life, still it has ceased to be the paramount lord of the earliest times.

These remarks apply in the closest manner to the function of speech. The infant, from a very early period, has means of expressing pleasure and displeasure, pain and desire ; it crows or smiles, moans



or cries, with an impulse purely instinctive and in no way superior to the like manifestation in the dog or the horse. But this state of things soon ends. Not long after the wandering eye and vacant stare of infancy have given way to the wistful gaze of dawning intellect, the ear also begins to note and treasure up sounds repeated in its hearing. At first, indeed, the child only showed a recognition of its father, or brother, or nurse, by that lighting up of the face approaching to a smile, which is unmistakably to be noticed even in the more intelligent breed of dogs on the sight of their master, and for which the Greeks had a peculiar word; a word which, as in the passage below, would serve equally for the affectionate glances of dear relations:\* but whenever the father comes in sight, the child's ear is struck by the repetition of his name; and it is not long before an imitative tendency, itself little more than an instinct, leads to the first attempt at speech, so long watched for and so carefully chronicled by the mother. In this attempt is the germ of future reason; the child has begun to exercise its power of *learning* and rises from the mere animal to the ranks of "articulate-speaking men."

Speech is, then, an acquirement, not a gift; and its intermediary instrument is the sense of hearing.

From the first, however, the mental capacity precedes and outstrips the physical muscular power. In this fact lies the explanation of that nursery vocabulary, which has existed in all ages, nations,

\* Cf. Sophocles, Œd. Col. 320:—

Φαῖδρά γοῦν ἀπ' ὀμμάτων  
Σαίνει με προστείχουσα.

Antigone is describing the approach of her sister Ismene.

and languages,\*—of those imperfect attempts to render by the unpractised vocal organs ideas already grasped by the mind.

Nor is it until several years have passed by that a full command is attained over the complex machinery of speech. Few things are more startling than to hear, as occasionally we all may, truths babbled forth from young minds which have begun to think soundly and earnestly, by lips which have not yet mastered the niceties of the investing language.

This want of control over the voice is not limited to youth alone. It is a well-known physiological fact that children deaf from their birth, although perfect in their vocal organs, remain mutes through life. And it is to be feared that many, without this excusing infirmity, never obtain such command over their articulating powers as fits them to exchange freely their thoughts and observations with their fellow men.

Our first object, then, is to give an account of the mechanism of speech, and of the organs whose use we all learn at various times, but in very different degrees of perfection.

The organs of speech in man consist of several complex muscular arrangements, beginning at the upper part of the windpipe and terminating at the opening of the lips. The lungs and chest, situated below this region, perform the office of organ bellows in supplying compressed air, whose vibrations,

\* It is remarkable that the result of the curious experiment narrated by Herodotus, II. 2, was the production of one of these nursery words—*βεκός*—*bekos*. It may possibly be an imitation of the goat's bleat by a child.

modified by the various appliances along its passage, cause the great variety of sounds available for singing or oratory.

In the instrument of speech there are two main elements; one the larynx, in which is formed the fundamental musical note; the other consisting of the throat, nose, tongue, teeth, and lips; by all of which the note produced below is started, stopped, and modified, into the syllables of which words are constructed. The former of these two elements is fairly represented in many of the wind instruments which man's ingenuity has fabricated; but the latter has nothing to correspond to it, and has never been imitated except with some imperfectness.

The larynx is best described as a cavity of very irregular shape, forming the upper extremity of the trachea or windpipe. By its upper part it is continuous with the back of the mouth, and is there in close proximity to the œsophagus or gullet. Indeed, as it opens in front of that tube, all our food has to pass over its edges; and would of necessity fall into it, if there were not a contrivance specially adapted to prevent such occurrences. The epiglottis forms a sort of lid to the orifice, and being highly sensitive, closes with spasmodic force directly any substance touches it; consequently, in the act of swallowing, the food glides over the top of this trap door, and reaches the stomach in safety.



The larynx is less than an inch below the epiglottis. Externally in the neck we can feel a hard pointed projection, commonly called the "*Pomum Adami*," or Adam's apple. This is the outer surface of the thyroid cartilage, which forms internally the walls of the larynx.

Across the cavity of the larynx are stretched two elastic membranes in the same horizontal plane. They are attached to the walls by thin edges, and nearly close the opening across which they are extended, leaving only a narrow slit in the middle.

For regulating the position and tension of these membranes a complex series of small muscles is provided. During silence and ordinary respiration it appears that the vocal ligaments, falling asunder behind in the shape of the capital letter V, leave a large opening for the passage of air. But at the commencement of speech or singing they are approximated as closely, or nearly so, behind, as they are permanently in front. There remains only a small flat chink; through which a worn shilling would about slip. Immediately the current of air is forced from the lungs through this fissure, its edges enter into vibration, and a musical note is produced.

This musical note is susceptible of great variation, proportionate to the greater or less tension of the vocal chords. In singing it ranges within a compass of about three octaves, and in most persons exceeds two. But in speaking the limits are much less extended. The extreme high and low notes are for obvious reasons but little used. Few persons much exceed an octave in the inflections of conversation, even where there is no difficulty in being heard; in speaking to an audience, or in any large space, the compass is necessarily much smaller than this. Indeed some of the most impressive preachers and orators of the present time make habitual use of only five or six consecutive musical notes.

Very few male voices, whatever their singing compass, make use of notes in speaking outside the

upper bass octave, from  to . Such as

do exceed these limits will at once attract attention by their exceptional shrillness or depth.

It is well known that the voices of women and of boys are of a much higher pitch. Generally speaking, there is an octave or rather more intervening between the two, and the soprano or treble voice is considered to begin at the middle C of the piano where the bass ends; the female contralto falls some notes below this, and the male tenor often rises nearly an octave above.

It is not to be supposed that the selection of a single tone, as the principal speaking note, implies the constant use of it through a long series of sentences, or even through several words. The pitch varies extensively with the character and rhythm of the subject. We are not generally aware ourselves how large are the musical intervals traversed by our voices in an impassioned elocution; and it is one of the first requisites for good speaking that this fact should be realized and carried into practice.

The rhetoricians of classical times made a distinction of sounds into concrete and discrete; by the latter were implied the ordinary musical intervals of most instruments, such as the flute and piano, definitely separated from one another, and incapable of blending together; by the latter were signified tones which want this clear demarcation from one another, but pass, by an insensible gradation, through a series of notes with more or less representation of all the intermediate sounds. This is the character of the notes used in speech; and by the wavelike

swaying to and fro of the inflection are they made so wonderful representations of the thoughts and passions passing through the mind.

Every one must, in a few cases, be well aware of this peculiarity of speech ; but it needs close attention to appreciate its extent. Perhaps the most convincing method of studying it consists in listening to an impassioned discourse—a lecture, or, still better, a dialogue, such as occurs in theatrical representation—at a distance, which shall obscure the sense of the individual words and leave only perceptible the inflections of the musical note. The short interval between arrival in the corridor and the opening of the box door at a theatre gives sometimes a very amusing illustration of the principle ; or, if the reader does not chance to have noticed this already, he has only to pause and listen before entering a room in which lecturing or public speaking of any kind is going on ; even the animated conversation of a family party is worth studying with this view. This exercise might be carried a step farther, and made a test of the control under which different persons keep their voices, and the more or less harmonious character of their periods. It would thus somewhat resemble the method recommended by some teachers of painting for studying the effect of colour and contrast uncomplicated by details of drawing and perspective.

The musical conditions of speech are moreover much affected by various circumstances external to the speaker. The principal of these are the number of persons addressed, and the size and character of the building containing them.

Generally speaking, anything which tends to make

hearing difficult is met by a corresponding rise in the pitch of the voice. Sir W. Scott, in one of his novels,\* has alluded to this fact as well known in mountainous districts,—in the roar of a waterfall or mountain torrent a shrill female voice can be heard where a man's deeper notes are quite inaudible; and every one must have remarked that in shouting to a great distance notes are used much above the ordinary speaking pitch. The same is true, in a less degree, of speaking to large numbers, or in a large building. It will generally be found that public speakers' voices, when used in conversation, seem to have sunk considerably in scale.

The same influences narrow the range of the upward and downward inflection: persons speaking to large audiences will be found to limit their notes to a comparatively small number; and one of the greatest difficulties in theatrical elocution is said to be the rendering the utterance of various passions and emotions with sufficient emphasis, and variety, without dropping the voice so much in places as to be partially inaudible.

Another musical element concerned is the consonance of the building with the speaker's voice. Every regularly shaped room has some one or two notes which reverberate more freely, and spread more easily through its various parts; and it is of the greatest importance that these should be adopted. For this purpose experiment and practice are probably the best guides. Indeed, to a person of a musical ear there is a consciousness of concord on the sounding of the consonant note, or one of its near relations.

\* Anne of Geierstein.



A convenient practical rule has, however, been given for the guidance of speakers in accommodating the loudness and pitch of their voice to the size of the room in which they have to speak. It consists in fixing the eyes on the farthest corner of the room, and addressing the speech to those who are there situated; commencing rather softly, the voice is gradually raised until it seems to return to the speaker, not with a noisy echo, but with a sensation of its pervading all parts of the building.

Buildings of very large size and of irregular form present a greater difficulty, inasmuch as they reverberate with several notes at a time, and sometimes prolong some one or more in the form of a musical echo. These echoes have been well divided into the quick echoes and the slow. The former immediately reverberate a confused iteration of the sounds; and the latter, which are generally much more distinct and articulate, only repeat after a pause of one or more seconds. The first kind apparently depends on the simultaneous reverberation from several flat surfaces, such as the walls, ceiling and floor, all of which are near the speaker, and whence the sound instantly returns. The second is generally attributable to some one or more distant reflecting surfaces accidentally placed in such a relation to the speaker as to return his words to him, after twice traversing the length of the building.\* The musical echo seems

\* The well-known Lurley echo on the Rhine is of this character. It is not necessary that the echo should return to the speaker himself most loudly. In one of the London churches, by a singular echo, the preacher seems to be speaking at the ear of a person directly he enters the door; and in St. Paul's



similar to the ringing sound produced by stamping or clapping the hands in a vaulted building, and probably depends on the reflection of sound from a large number of small surfaces, situated at regular and symmetrical distances beyond one another. Thus the returned wave of sound comes in pulsations following one another at fixed intervals, determined by the distance of each reflecting surface beyond the last. Now as regularity of pulsation above a certain rapidity forms a musical note, this kind of echo is more or less impressed with the same character. There seems no remedy for these difficulties, except a consciousness of their effects with great slowness and deliberation in speech; but high pitch is an important auxiliary. In connection with this point it is curious to notice that in our cathedrals, buildings generally of very large size and irregular shape, and frequently echoing with several discordant musical echoes, the practice of intoning has been preserved. It would appear as if this custom of reciting the prayers to a single high note, with occasional rising and falling inflections to mark the terminations of the sense, had at first originated in accident; for it is an indisputable fact that the same voice can be made to travel much farther in a building when it is thus used than when there is much fluctuation of the pitch; indeed, the returning echoes meeting with an incongruous note greatly obscure the sound. Most persons, moreover, who have to read with some rapidity, after a time fall into a monotone more or less

school-room the master of one form could formerly hear the voices from another form at the end of the room more distinctly than those of the boys immediately around his desk.

perfect, according to the accuracy of their ear and their control of voice. In college chapels the writer has frequently had occasion to notice this; for in them the service is mostly repeated twice a day by the same chaplain.

Even the inflections used in intoning seem in the same way derived from those natural to the voice. If we read aloud to ourselves the suffrages of the Morning Prayer, or of the Litany, with much emphasis and feeling, we shall often find that we are unconsciously approaching very near to the setting of them in Tallis's Service, or still nearer to those of the common Cathedral Use.

In making the preceding remarks it is far from our intention to consider speech as a branch of music. This has indeed been attempted;\* several learned and ingenious works have been devoted principally to carrying out this theory. But interesting as the subject may be, in the light of a problem of physical science, it can hardly be trusted to as a guide for the attainment of direct intonation.

Thus it is not the proper place to go minutely into the doctrine of the rising and falling inflections, and the modifications of sense suggested by them. These and other questions of accent and rhythm can be as well, or better, investigated apart from musical considerations.

At the same time it seems of the utmost importance to impress clearly on the mind of a learner the fact that the musical inflections of the speaking voice are very extensive; indeed, they may easily

\* Steele: "An Essay towards establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech, &c. London, 1775." Dr. Rush: "Philosophy of the Human Voice, Philadelphia, 1845."

rise or fall through a space of four or five tones at a time. This fact is probably not realized explicitly by the great majority of speakers; for imitation and training develope the use of the voice so early, and so unconsciously, that we get to be ignorant of the processes which we are constantly employing. And here we may meet an objection which will perhaps have risen in the minds of our readers. "If," it will be said, "speech is so early and unconsciously acquired, in a word, so natural, why not leave it entirely to nature, and, by speaking just as our senses or feelings prompt us, encourage a simplicity which is one of the greatest charms of a good address?" The first and easiest answer to this lies in the great rarity of good speakers even among educated men: this has been the subject of so much comment of late that it hardly needs formal proofs. But secondly, it may be added that, even were the number of good speakers greater, surely an attempt to organize the rules of the art will benefit those who by lack of opportunity or for other reasons are not included in that lucky number. But the most complete and real answer to this fallacy consists in an entire denial of the "natural" hypothesis. Speech is by no means a "natural" function in the usual sense of that word.\* It is a complex and difficult acquirement, perfected through many centuries in the course of progressive civilization; it is one of the highest of those hereditary lessons which really make the education of each member of an intellectual community the affair of ages. In our speech, as in some

\* The phrase "natural," if it means anything, must be understood as born with us, and not acquired by practice and education.

other branches of knowledge, we may say that our schooling began centuries before our birth; and when one side of speech—language—receives the attention of the highest minds of the present day, surely the other and supplementary side—elocution—should not be neglected.

Thus much requires to be said on the musical element of articulate speech; but there is another of equal importance, and of even more complexity.

The mechanism lies entirely above the larynx and consists principally of the cavities of the mouth and nose, the tongue, palate, teeth, and lips. It has two principal actions, the one forming what are called the vowel sounds, and the other the consonants. The former of these consists in the addition of a distinctive quality or tone to the speaking note, by modifications in the shape of the orifice from which it issues. Thus, by allowing the sound to pass through an expanded and trumpet-like oral aperture, one character of vowel-sound is given; and another again by almost closing the lips so that the mouth represents a hollow bell. Many persons will have appreciated this fact already, and those who by accident have not done so can make the experiment for themselves. By pronouncing the different vowels singly aloud, and then finding some word, most conveniently a monosyllable, in which the same sound occurs, it is easy to distinguish the shape taken by the organs of speech in the formation of each. Indeed, the experiment has before now been carried a step farther; and machines have been made, which, by a combination of a small wind-instrument to give a note, and pipes of varied form and orifice to modify this note, have imitated

very successfully the vowels of human speech. The speaking machine of Dr. Kempeler excited much interest some years ago. Kratzenstein in 1779, and Professor Willis recently, have both contrived apparatus of the same nature ; and the latter has successfully analysed the principles on which they depend.

The second office of forming the consonants depends on the same physical parts somewhat differently employed. For the production of consonants consists, generally speaking, either in a more or less sudden starting of the stream of air, or in its equally abrupt stoppage. But as this function is of a complex nature, and lies at the root of distinct articulation, it will be well to explain it by a cursory analysis of the mechanical processes involved in the pronunciation of the various letters.

The attempt to classify the alphabet of our language is one of considerable difficulty. For of the twenty-six letters which it comprises some are evidently used with two different values, and others are mere compounds of two simpler sounds. The cause of this is to be sought in its history. Probably no European tongue has so greatly altered with the course of time, and by the addition of new dialectic elements. It is now of the Teutonic languages by far the most remote from what we must consider to have been the original state of *all* language ; a condition in which syllables were similar in spelling and in pronunciation. At the present time, of above 70,000 words which compose our vocabulary, not more than seventy, or one in a 1000, are literally and “phonetically” correct.

It is thus clear that the present alphabet, though

sufficient for all purposes of ordinary intercourse, is quite insufficient as a transcript of the sounds actually used in speech. From this and from other causes there is some difference of opinion as to their real number. Bishop Wilkins thought thirty-four letters, of which eight were vowels, and twenty-six consonants, would include all possible sounds. Volney, who aimed at establishing an universal language, affirmed that fifty-eight or sixty letters would be necessary for this purpose. More recently, Sir John Herschel establishes thirty-four letters for the English language, of which thirteen are vowels and twenty-one consonants; by the addition of two or three more vowels, and as many consonants, in all forty letters, he states that all the sounds of every spoken language can be rendered. But it is not necessary to proceed to this minuteness for the ordinary purposes of correct speech. A very convenient classification consists of ten vowel sounds, and twenty consonants, in all thirty letters. This is numerically only four more than the ordinary alphabet contains, but the real difference is greater than would appear in that manner. For in the present alphabet there are only twenty simple characters by which thirty sounds are to be represented; the remaining ten are somewhat clumsily produced, either by the union of two simple sounds to form one letter, or by different values attached to the same written character in its varying relations.

The vowel sounds\* may be divided into three classes. The first class consists of four sounds, all

\* The classification here adopted is that of Mr. Bishop. *Vide*, "On Articulate Sounds, and the Causes and Cure of Impediments of Speech." London, 1851.



of which, being formed far back in the throat, have been termed pharyngeal vowels ; these are the sounds of the vowels in the following words—*ball, bar, bat, but*. It will be remarked that three of these are represented by the same letter, *a* ; although the sounds are essentially different. There is, moreover, a fourth sound belonging to this single letter ; and in this instance we have the best proof of the insufficiency of the ordinary alphabet to express our spoken language.

The next group also contains four sounds ; these are respectively contained in the words, *bate, bet, beet, bit*. As they are principally formed by the tongue and palate, they are named the linguo-palatal vowels.

The third class contains only two sounds, those of the words, *bone* and *boot*. These are mainly formed by the lips, almost closed, and are hence called the labial vowels.

Thus of the whole ten sounds four are modifications of the written character *a* ; two of *e* ; two of *o* ; *i* and *u* each represent only one sound. Indeed, strictly speaking, there are only three simple vowel sounds in the English alphabet, namely, *a, e, o* ; for *i* and *u*, when pronounced as they stand alone, are diphthongs.

Diphthongs are formed by the combination of two simple vowel sounds. This combination is produced by sliding the one sound rapidly and insensibly into the other. There is no actual mixture of the actions necessary to produce each sound, beyond what results from a succession almost too quick for the ear to follow. But by pronouncing the diphthong slowly we can separate the component parts. Mr.

Bishop points out the possibility of triphthongs, or combinations of three vowels, and gives the instances of *wound*, *why*, and *your*.

The classification of the consonants is more complicated than that of the vowels. Indeed, no one arrangement can be proposed which adequately separates them. The simplest division is into those which can, and those which cannot, be pronounced without a vowel; the former only put a *partial* impediment in the way of the current of air, and are hence called the “continuous” consonants, or *semi-vowels*; the latter completely check the stream, and are called “explosive” consonants or *mutes*.

The semi-vowels are as follows—*f*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, *s*, *v*, *z*, *th* (of two forms, as in *thin* and *then*), *sh*, *zh*, *ng*. To these we may add *h*, the simple aspirate sound.

The mutes are—*b*, *d*, *g*, *k*, *p*, *t*.

But this classification alone is hardly sufficient. We may accordingly employ the same means of distinction between consonants as we did for the vowels; by looking to the parts of the vocal organs used in their production. These are, indeed, all called into action, but in very different proportions for the different groups of sounds.

In the throat the guttural letters *g* and *k*, also the aspirate *h*, are more especially formed. The lips alone form the letters *b* and *p*—hence called labials. The upper row of teeth with the lower lip produce the labio-dentals *n* and *f*. It is quite possible to produce these letters by the use of the lower teeth and the upper lip; and the experiment is worth trying, for it will be found by no means easy; the difficulty experienced is a practical evidence of the complex



nature of the actions employed in speech, and the amounts to which long habit makes them automatic.

The tongue and teeth together form *s* and *z*, with the equally simple sounds of *sh* and *zh*, as well as *th* and *dh*. These are thence called linguo-dentals. The tongue with the roof of the mouth, or palate, produce the sounds of *l*, *r*, *d*, and *t*, hence called linguo-palatals.

The letters *m*, *n*, and the sound *ng*, are usually called nasals, from their essentially depending on the passage of some of the vocal stream through the nose. It is well known that when, either by natural defect, or by the swelling usually attending a cold in the head, the nasal passage is stopped up, these letters cannot be pronounced, *m* becoming *b*, and *n*, *d*.

But, more strictly speaking, in the formation of *m* the lips are also used; hence it may be called a labio-nasal. So, too, in the formation of *n* and *ng* the tongue and palate are engaged. Hence these may be termed linguo-palato-nasals. The remaining letters must be separately examined.

*C*, when hard, is equivalent to *k*; when soft is the same as *s*.

*G* has a second, or soft sound, as in the word *German*; here it is equivalent to *j*, which is itself formed of *d* and a soft sibilant *zh*. In French this *d* is not pronounced, and *j* is simply *zh*, as in *joli*. *Gh*, which occurs in many English words, is pronounced without any guttural sound, as in the word *daughter*. In the Gaelic tongues, and in Italian and Persian, the guttural is preserved.

*Q* is merely *k* followed invariably by *u*. *H* has been put among the guttural letters, though perhaps

it does not properly belong there. Indeed, the Greek language was probably correct in not considering it as a letter at all, but as a "breathing." It is formed by no particular part of the oral cavity, and is the sound of a strong current of air passing rapidly through the fauces. When very much forced, it merges into a guttural. *W* should, perhaps, appear as a labial. It seems, however, to consist of a rapid reduplication of the sound of *u*, and in English appears always as a sort of diphthong with another vowel. In Welch it stands alone, and then is equivalent to *u*. *X*, when occurring in the beginning of foreign words, is pronounced as *z*; when occurring in the middle of a word it is equivalent to *ks* or *kz*. *Y*, called in French the Greek I, has the force of this letter, and a power of making peculiar diphthongs with other vowels much as does *w*. *J*, in Italian and German, has the sound of *y*, and also in English in the Hebrew word Hallelujah; though in Jehovah, and in other similar words from the Hebrew, we retain the ordinary *j* sound.

Having thus, as briefly as possible, traced the operation of the various parts ministering to speech, we are led on to a few general remarks suggested by the review. The first that will naturally occur to every one is the complexity of the actions involved in it. This idea had struck our great physiologist, Sir Charles Bell, who draws attention to the large number of organs "whose consent is necessary" for the utterance of a single word. If we run over the various parts called into activity by the exercise of speech the remark is fully borne out. As a means of forming some estimate of their number we will give a brief enumeration of the muscles only, omitting the other structures necessarily involved.

In the larynx itself are eight muscles more immediately controlling the tension of the vocal membranes. The tongue and palate contain about twenty more; the lips and cavity of the mouth comprise ten others. All these, to the number of thirty-eight or forty, are employed directly in the articulate utterance of a sentence. When we add to these the muscles of the thorax, employed indirectly in regulating the stream of air, and advert, lastly, to the various other accessory muscles of the extremities or elsewhere, without some action of which it is difficult, if not impossible, to speak with any fluency, we have reached a point of complication hardly paralleled by any other of our daily functions.

It is easy to foresee some practical results which flow out of this statement. And first:—The physiological result of all action of muscle is the production of fatigue. Not any one can continue its straining condition for more than a few seconds without an interval of rest. Even the ever-working muscle of the heart has its short period of repose, between two successive pulsations; the repose amounting to nearly a quarter of the time of activity. It is then essential, even in speech, to provide against muscular fatigue; a result which is brought about by pauses and deliberation. And this is a more important corollary from the foregoing propositions than it at first appears; for the majority of persons err on the side of too quick speaking. It is true that we now and then meet with the converse error; and perhaps the tiresome delay of a slow delivery attracts more notice than over-rapidity of utterance. But such cases usually occur in lymphatic and languid temperaments, and form a consistent

part of a sluggish and unexcitable disposition. Whereas the hurried and inarticulate speakers belong to no class in particular, and are equally found among members of all the various professions which do not depend on oratory for their prosecution. And if these remarks are true of ordinary conversational speech, they acquire a double importance when transferred to public speaking, and the occasions on which one man has to address many others. The result of some observation leads us to mention the remarkable length of the pauses made between following sentences by many of our best oratorical speakers. A pause of from two to three seconds by the watch is very common, and recurs at intervals of from three to seven minutes in an ordinary discourse, whether on sacred or secular subjects. Five seconds not uncommonly mark the conclusion of a particular branch of the argument; and even longer pauses have a pleasant effect at rare intervals, and after any considerations more than usually abstruse. For it is to be borne in mind that the attention in this matter bears a close analogy to the bodily organs; and that an earnest hearer can only be kept up by occasional relief; his forces must be husbanded like the strength of a generous horse; for, however good the will, however interesting the pursuit, they will both infallibly be worn out by a course devoid of breathing time and intermissions. We may perhaps better estimate the effect of occasional pauses in oratory by a comparison which appears to have some foundation in truth. It is a well-known fact that the old painted glass which forms so magnificent an ornament of our mediæval buildings, and of which the secret is said to be all

but lost, is remarkable for the quantity of pure white which is interwoven in its patterns; this cannot clearly do otherwise than diminish the actual intensity of the colouring, and yet its removal damages more seriously the general effect than that of any other element. Now a fair explanation of this seems to be afforded by the fact that too continuous colour fatigues the eye; just as in a like manner too constant sound wearies the ear, and as attention too unremitting overpowers the mind itself. The analogy of the various senses and of the central intelligence is really so close in its various relations, that parallels have almost the force of argument, and are worthy the most serious consideration.

It is evident that any such principle as this will require modification to a greater or less extent when carried into practice. The nature of the subject, the place, and the audience may all call for special attention. For instance, the greatest exception will have to be made in regard to the class of oratory usually termed "husting's speaking," or more graphically by our transatlantic kinsmen as "stump oratory." Of this we profess no foolish contempt. It is a great engine in the hands of an honest man; though considered rhetorically its standard is not high. Perhaps its most essential character may be stated as the terse, antithetical, and almost paradoxical enunciations of truths, more or less trite, in short simple sentences. It needs no very sustained attention, and is marked by a rapid succession of short pauses instead of longer and less frequent intermissions. But it is hardly an affair of art, and more the fruit of instinct than the higher branches of speaking. We may, perhaps, add our opinion that one of the

worst signs of modern taste, an evidence of the almost utter extinction of true eloquence in England, has been shown in the elevation of this spurious rhetoric to the pulpit. Its chief apostle has, like his more avowedly histrionic brethren, had exaggerated praise and popularity for a very brief period ; we sincerely hope that such a false and superficial style may, now that the first fashion has passed away, find few admirers and still less imitation.

Rapidity of speech is not only the result of actual hurry, and irrespective of the language, but, in England at least, is favoured by a peculiarity of the language itself. The principle of accentuating strongly one syllable of every word is susceptible of much abuse and exaggeration. For an excess of stress on the accented part, or a neglected enunciation of the unaccented members, produce the same evil result ; the sentence becomes, what often strikes foreigners very disagreeably, a string of audible accented syllables standing out from an inaudible mass of inarticulate sounds. We ourselves learn to supply this deficiency from habit and memory ; but it is none the less reprehensible on that account. To this defect of speech much attention has been given, and perhaps it has attained an undue prominence from the neglect of cautions equally essential. At the same time no fault is so common or so little reprehended by society. The omission of aspirates is reckoned a disqualification for the company of gentlemen ; while a loose and languid utterance, which articulates none but the accented syllable, and completely drops the terminal letters of every word, is, in some quarters, held evidence of good breeding.

Another physiological deduction from a review of



the mechanism of speech is that many of the actions of muscles involved in the articulation of long combinations of simple sounds are not only complex but contradictory. Some even require the mouth and tongue to fall back to the position of rest before the proper sound can again be framed. Ignorance, or inattention to this fact, is a fertile cause of imperfect speech. Its least severe form is far from uncommon, where the speaker seems to grudge every atom of movement required: the mouth is hardly opened, the teeth remain close together, and the sounds formed within are pent up from want of freer means of exit. The general result is indistinctness combined with a whistling sort of intonation which men of other nations notice as a common characteristic of English speech. They usually refer it, with partial truth, to the nature of the language itself; though much more is probably due to temperament, carelessness, and the lamentable neglect of instruction into which we have fallen on the subject. Imperfections of this character, carried to their highest degree, terminate in stammering. It is now a well-ascertained fact that scarcely any instances of this common infirmity depend on structural defect or malformation of the vocal organs. A very exceptional shortness of the frænum of the tongue, nearly always discovered during infancy, and some thickness of utterance, dependent on abnormal enlargement of the tonsils, are the most obvious possible causes. All varieties of hoarseness should be excepted, because, though they more or less completely destroy the musical character of the speaking note, they in no way interfere with articulation, or prevent the speaker from being perfectly intelligible.

We have already mentioned that the cases of mutes are entirely dependent on absence of the sense of hearing, there being abundant observations to prove that there is no physical deficiency in the apparatus of speech. But there is another element involved in this question ; and physiology here gives us valuable assistance, by showing the intimate dependence of good articulation on the brain and nervous centres.

It may appear somewhat paradoxical to state that we all stammer more or less ; but it is nevertheless true : and any cause sufficient to destroy the concert and co-ordination of the very numerous parts acting under the control of the will at times produces this result. The commonest cause is the emotion of fright ; hence one of the conventional modes of representing fright on the stage consists in sudden stammering. Anger also is far from an uncommon cause, surprise and sudden joy are less common ; in a few persons sleepiness is sufficient to produce it ;\* and the more advanced stages of alcoholic intoxication usually exhibit the symptom. In some forms of paralytic disease, where the nerves of the tongue and fauces are involved, stammering is a prominent feature ; it may then occur after what is popularly termed “ a stroke ” even in the most articulate speaker.

\* The converse fact is also remarkable, for there are many persons, who, being habitually loose and careless speakers in ordinary conversation, rise, under excitement sufficiently powerful, into an accurate and forcible elocution. In this manner the fiery Celt of the Highlands, as Sir Walter Scott mentions, only speaks pure and articulate English when roused by the vehemence of rage. In the latter case the excited brain stimulates the organs to an energy beyond their usual limit, while in the former the volition so far exceeds the power of execution as partially to overwhelm it.



But the inveterate stammering which of itself amounts to a morbid condition is rather different in its history. It is usually commenced insensibly and unnoticed at an early period of life; in great measure it depends on the child finding more than ordinary difficulty in mastering certain articulate combinations. If to this there be added a nervous and irritable temper of mind, the attempts at overcoming the impediment give rise to unsystematic and ill-controlled efforts. By degrees the co-ordination of the organs of speech, which from the first has been imperfectly acquired, becomes more and more impaired, and the unsuccessful straining gains a spasmodic character. At this stage a painful consciousness of defect usually springs up in the mind of the sufferer, and there is added the additional evil of hurry and nervousness. In this manner, unless some controlling influence be early employed, the fault will infallibly become confirmed by time, and ultimately all but incurable.

We believe this to be the history of far the greater number of such cases; others probably depend on example and imitation from the society of stammerers; and a few are connected with a real morbid condition of the nervous centres, known medically as Chorea, popularly as St. Vitus's Dance.

This view of the habitual origin of stammering is confirmed by the existence of varieties in the defect. Every one will have noticed some of these differences, and the dissimilar character of spasm in the several instances. A distinction may be made according to the situation of the impediment. This is in the first kind at the glottis or upper opening of the windpipe, and produces what is really a very ex-

aggerated form of hesitation ; for by the closure of this organ the musical note and current of air issuing from the larynx are entirely intercepted ; the syllables pronounced cease suddenly, and involuntary silences result. A similar effect is often produced as completely in the labial form of stammering, and occasionally in severe instances of the other forms.

In a second kind the tract immediately above the glottis, usually termed the “ isthmus of the fauces,” is implicated. The posterior part of the mouth and upper region of the throat being spasmodically contracted, a guttural and aspirate sound issues, either alone or as an affix to words not requiring it. This difficulty will be specially felt in pronouncing the words containing the aspirate, the letter *g*, the compounds *ch*, *gh*, and the letter *k* in some combinations.

In another and very common form the dorsum of the tongue with the palate or the teeth are the obstacles. The number of letters to whose formation these organs contribute being comparatively large, the defect introduced into speech is prominent and frequently recurring ; it causes the more remark as the continued or imperfect pronunciation of letters in these groups gives rise to protracted hissing and buzzing sounds ; just as in the previous instance there was a near approach to the voice of some lower animals.\* In this form of the infirmity the group of *l*, *d*, and *t*, with their compounds *th* and *dh*, form the great difficulty to some, and the letters *s*, *z*, *sh*, and *j*, with the soft *ch*, to others.

\* It is a curious and somewhat ludicrous fact that a stammerer sometimes attracts the notice of dogs, who look upon these singular sounds as voluntary, and receive them accordingly.

Lastly, there is the labial form of stammering, in which the nose may or may not be implicated. The purely labial letters *b* and *p*, and the labio-dentals, *v*, *f*, form the obstacles in the first place, and the nasals *m* and *n*, in the second. In the former, as we have said above, there is total silence by closure of the lips during the spasm; and in the latter the pent-up air is sent with a humming noise through the nasal passages.

It is, of course, possible for two of these forms of defect to coexist in the same person; but, as a general rule, it will not be difficult to refer each case to one of the classes given above. And a recognition of the faulty parts leads easily to simple methods of cure or of alleviation.

One other form of imperfection in speech requires notice before concluding. This is the unintentional use of the "falsetto" by adults. It is not quite certain what is the exact mode in which this variety of note is at any time produced. But its effect is the utterance of soft, very reedy tones, about an octave above the usual pitch of the male voice. Arguing from the analogy of the harmonics on stringed instruments which are of similar quality, it would seem to be due to the formation of more nodal points in the vocal chord than are required for the fundamental note.

Most male voices have a few such notes, and bass singers usually more than tenors. It is sometimes a voice of very fine musical character, and, though considered rare, always takes one part, the alto, of cathedral music: in the older school of English and Italian madrigal composition it is so

freely used as to raise the suspicion that it was commoner, or more cultivated, formerly than at the present day. Even alto singers, however, in ordinary conversation and in public speaking, use the lower and more natural notes of their voices. And the defect which we are now considering consists either in the entire or partial use of a falsetto note as the speaking tone. Most men can intentionally do this for a short time ; and it is evidently intended in some of the old comedies to be used on the stage as a means of counterfeiting the female voice. But when involuntary the habit is incorrect and very unpleasant. It is, indeed, the correlative of stammering, and probably depends on some lack of co-ordination in the laryngeal muscles, just as stammering does upon the same defect in the muscles of the tongue and mouth. Usually it commences at the time when the boy's voice "breaks"—a time when rapid increase in size and development of the larynx cause the pitch to descend an octave within the course of a year or two. Its causes seem ultimately to rest in a slow and imperfect performance of this change, and also very frequently in a want of that sensitiveness to the pitch of sounds which goes by the name of "musical ear." For it is to be noticed that persons suffering from this imperfection are often no more aware of the rapid transition of the voice from one register to the other than are the lower orders in London of the difference between the *v* and *w*, or between aspirated and unaspirated words.

It is, however, like speech itself, only an acquired habit. It may be conquered by constant warning and perseverance until the correct method has become automatic.

## APPENDIX.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

**I**N accordance with the suggestion contained in page 43 of "The Speaker at Home," I hasten to make one or two observations which have occurred to me during its perusal, as bearing upon one part of your subject, viz. the management of the voice in speaking.

Too much praise cannot be accorded to you for calling the attention of the clergy and public speakers to this most important subject; for it is one—singularly enough—that has not received the meed of attention it so much deserves, seeing that in it lies one of the most important means upon which the success or failure of the public speaker depends.

I need not refer to the universally acknowledged value of correct principles of action in the cultivation of the voice to those who devote themselves to the art of singing; and it appears to me that much may be done by the speaker, if not towards enchaining an audience, at least in the acquirement of a power of transmitting his ideas to each individual of a large assembly, even in the most remote corner of a large edifice; and it is to this branch of the subject I shall confine my remarks, as being the one least of all touched upon in your little work, but which seems to me to be one, which, when treating of

public speaking, demands no small degree of attention.

One of the great mistakes public speakers make is *loud speaking*, as if, by applying all the force, not only of the vocal organs, but also all the bodily effort that can be mustered, they could in the slightest degree aid the *conveyance* of articulation ; when experience so clearly proves that, on the contrary, it is by the total suppression of bodily effort beyond an easy gesticulation, and, in its stead, employing the concentrated force obtained from the co-operation and combined action of the several vocal organs in *their own strength*, that can even so *plant* the articulation that the production of it is more a matter of ease than effort, and the conveyance of it a natural consequence.

Now, the two essentials to conveying words to the whole of a large audience are, a *prompt* co-operation of the several vocal organs, and the power of sustaining that combination when required ; or, in other words, the co-operation of the several organs, so as to produce the most brilliant, firm, elegant, and round vocal tone, added to a clear articulation, with the promptitude necessary to rapid speaking, and at the same time to possess the power of controlling it when obtained, so as to fit it to long or short syllables. To do this effectually it will be absolutely necessary to pay great attention to the pronunciation of the vowels ; for I am of opinion that however expedient it may be that the consonants, in all their variety, should be pronounced with every attention to exactness, yet the grand source from whence the speaker should derive his power of transmitting speech is the proper fitting of the vowels, each in a

perfect mould formed for it within the mouth. The outlay of a little trouble upon this matter at first will at once convince you that there is a practical reason why physiologists all agree that the vocal organs have a power to mould or concentrate a vibrating column of air. Indeed, I have had abundant evidence of its being palpably felt, and it is to the attainment of this power that I will more particularly direct your attention.

In a work of mine on "The Structure and Management of the Vocal Organ,"\* I have endeavoured to explain this, but with what success in *writing* I will not venture to say; but this I can affirm, that my pupils never fail in producing and feeling it, and that too in the course of a very few lessons.

Now there are five vowels—these are all I think necessary at first—which should be diligently practised until the mould for each one becomes automatic; and the plan of procedure I would recommend is, to begin by reading aloud several times the same passage *deliberately*, as in speaking or reading to an audience, each time varying the pitch or tonic of the voice—in fact, *intoning*—and you will soon discover which pitch appears the most comfortable and tires you the least. You should then read the passage in the pitch you have found the easiest, giving to your reading the inflections which your mind suggests as being the best adapted to the subject. Sing now the vowel *a*, as pronounced in the Italian language, upon the same pitch, and also, upon the semitones immediately above and below it, to the extent to which you usually carry the inflections of your voice when reading or speaking, and upon each of these sounds

\* Published by Messrs. Cocks and Co. New Burlington St.



endeavour to mould or fit the tone and articulation in its proper place in the mouth, in such a manner that the vibration of the vocal ligaments is free, the tone brilliant, and the articulation clear, bearing in mind that it is your aim to aid its conveyance or travelling properties by a *forward* or *outward* pronunciation.

After a few trials the mouth will be found to "lay hold of" the tone, and you will have little difficulty in sustaining it. An hour's practice at this every day will soon establish in your mind the note upon which you feel the sensation of "laying hold of the tone" in the most certain manner. This tone should then be made the base of operation, and should be practised until it can be produced at pleasure. The base or foundation tone having been formed it will now be necessary to pass to the semitone above it, and, as another exercise, to the semitone below it, singing the two notes in one breath, so as to carry with you, to the next note, the sensation and moulding which you have experienced in the note which is your base of operation. When this can be done with ease, and the same quality of tone and articulation produced upon both the notes, this practice should be extended to the entire range of semitones in the compass of the usual inflections of voice in reading.\*

If this exercise be clearly understood and felt,

\* The advantages to be derived from singing these vowels will be at once obvious. The prolongation of the vowel sounds so much beyond their ordinary speaking value will materially assist you in forming a proper and effective mould for each one in the mouth. The vocal organs having taken their position, and you are endeavouring to maintain or sustain it, the prolongation of it gives you time, not only to

there will be very little difficulty in changing the vowel *a* to *i* (Italian pronunciation); and so on with all the others, fitting each vowel in like manner: in fact, allowing the base or foundation of the vocal tone to remain the same, and simply varying the ornamentation or change of vowel according to your own desires. This, then, at once establishes the power of transmitting these five vowels to the required distance; after which the numerous modifications of them, and their relation to consonants, may be readily got over. Do not suppose that this is to be effectually accomplished without some trouble. But be assured that the careful devoting of a portion of each day to the practice of such exercises as these will soon bring the muscular organs of the voice under control.

This control really consists in the total subjection of the physical powers of the vocal organ to the direction of the mind, and hence those varied and pleasing inflections of the speaking voice which, when combined with fluent and carefully constructed sentences and an earnestness of purpose, produce that elegant and eloquent delivery that becomes almost irresistible.

The “stirring tones of earnestness” are, no doubt, always in a degree efficacious in arresting the attention of an audience; but how much more powerful would the effect of these “stirring tones” be had they been previously cultivated with a due regard to

ascertain the exact amount of concentrating capacity and propelling power you have gained, but also to study, test, and feel each of the *articulate* positions with such certainty, that they may eventually be changed, varied, or modified, with the rapidity required in speaking, without losing in the slightest degree their clearness and brilliancy of expression.

their individual beauty and the power of conveying, in combination, an articulation at once clear, expressive, and unmistakable.

The natural constitution of the vocal organs differs in each individual. In some persons the organs are free and flexible in their action and easy of control, that is, they are susceptible of the most delicate impressions; and in such cases the mind of the speaker, being thoroughly engrossed with the sentiment he wishes to convey, will doubtless attract the hearer's attention and impress his mind with similar emotions.

But what is to be said of the organs which, on the contrary, are stiff, hard, and unwieldy, and whose owners have difficulty in correctly intoning two simple sounds?

In such cases there might be even a greater degree of "*evident feeling*" experienced by the speaker or singer, but it has no effect upon the organs, they will not answer to the dictation of the mind; in fact, it is a rusty engine that must be cleaned and oiled before it can be made to work. Force it, and you will break it; use it kindly and coaxingly, and you may bring it under subjection.

My own experience in the teaching of singing has been, that I have seldom questioned the student's *desire* to effect what was proposed for him, but have invariably found the power of volition insufficient to control the muscular portion of the organs, in consequence of their habitual rigidity and obstinacy in refusing to work with freedom. I therefore believe it to arise from the almost universal habit of a forced preparation to sing, which at once confines the operation of the organs or fixes them so tightly that the volition (however powerfully exerted) fails to influence them.

In illustration of this I can instance numerous cases, in which not only the natural compass of the voice has been lessened, but the quality of tone impaired, by the obstinate resistance of the vocal organs to anything like elasticity, and have afterwards found, by adopting even the most simple measures to relieve the oppression—such as making the pupil walk round the room, and, whilst walking, attempt to sing the same exercise that had so often failed—and this trifling act has so drawn off the forced preparation that the upward scale has been extended instantaneously as many as four or five notes, and the downward scale in like proportion, to the great delight both of myself and pupil.

Of the necessity of a very spare use of the breath, I will give one or two illustrations; and they are these:—

The near approximation of the vocal ligaments at the commencement of speaking or singing would be likely to be prevented if a *stream of breath either too copious or too impulsive were forced between them*, and thus their freedom in vibrating would be partially checked; besides, a large portion of the emitted air would pass out without its being acted upon by the vibrations of the vocal ligaments, and thus a whistling sound would be intermingled with the vibrations, causing what is generally known by the term "*huskiness*." Just as if we allow the entire pressure of a gasometer to have its full force upon a small jet burner, the flame will be irregular and buzzing, whilst, if the pressure be regulated according to the capacity of the jet, a brilliant flame of perfect outline will be the result.

Let it not be understood that I by any means

accept the notion that a good *singer* must necessarily be a good *speaker*, or *vice versa*. Certainly not! But this I do believe—that if the speaker were to cultivate his voice *for speaking* with equal care and system that the singer cultivates *his* for *singing*, both will ultimately reap the same advantages in their separate spheres of action.

The limits of a communication such as the present precludes my saying more than this—that should I by these few remarks have succeeded in drawing closer the relation between singing and public speaking or reading, and in showing the necessity of a systematic cultivation of the voice, I shall rejoice that I have been thus enabled to direct attention, even in so slight a degree, to the consideration of so important a matter.

Believe me to remain, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

FRED. KINGSBURY.

18, Cecil Street, Strand.

P. S. In support of my whole theory I might appeal to the fact of a singer, possessed of no extraordinary physical or mental qualifications, being able to make himself distinctly heard in the extreme parts of a very large edifice, and that too without any perceptible or painful effort; also to the well-known fact that where the voice is cultivated to a high degree of artistic excellence, it will often be heard to rise clearly and distinctly above the sound of a band and chorus. This superiority is undoubtedly gained by the tone and travelling properties of the voice being properly cultivated.

Nov. 20, 1859.

LORD ———\* presents his compliments to the Rev. J. J. Halcombe, and is happy to comply with the request which is contained in the note on p. 47 of "The Speaker at Home."

Having often heard that the longer a member sits in the House of Commons without speaking, the harder it is for him to make a beginning, I determined to lose no time in delivering my maiden speech. It had not, until last election, been my intention to enter Parliament; so that I had never "got up" any political subjects. It was therefore necessary, before any speech could even be planned, that I should take a subject and study, so as to form definite opinions upon it. The following plan I adopted. Having chosen ————— for my topic, I read all the debates and pamphlets which could throw any light upon it, and wrote very numerous notes while reading. When this part of the labour was accomplished, I reviewed the notes, and arranged them under heads, in an order which had suggested itself to my mind. I then cast out all that appeared to be irrelevant, and whatever did not make straight for the point at which I wished to aim. To make a short schedule of the various heads, together with memoranda of some embellishments and illustrations was my next care. And when this schedule was clearly imprinted on my mind, I frequently spoke the speech over to myself whilst out walking, in order to accustom myself to various modes of expression. Then I wrote out the whole speech, bestowing particular attention upon the Exordium and on the Peroration. And lastly, I learnt these

\* The blank spaces have been left in accordance with a request to that effect made by the writer of the above in a subsequent letter.

two parts by heart, but never looked again at the rest of the speech.

The same plan (leaving much more to the chances of the critical moment) I have found to answer on less important occasions.

THE following incident will illustrate the advantage of speaking naturally and not straining the voice. A clergyman, on first preaching in a large London church, had requested a friend to seat himself at the extreme end of the church, to tell him whether he succeeded in making himself heard. His friend reported that in the prayer before the sermon, when he spoke without the least effort, and in an earnest but subdued voice, he was perfectly audible; but that during the sermon, when he evidently exerted himself to the utmost, scarcely a word was distinguished.

THE END.











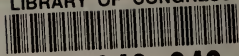








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